

# Havant in the Second World War



The Havant War Memorial.

Ann Griffiths

This booklet has been published to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the start of the Second World War on 3rd September 1939 and to remember those men from Havant who lost their lives during the conflict.





West Street in the 1930s.

Havant Borough History Booklet No. 36

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Edited by Ralph Cousins and Richard Brown.

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# Introduction

This booklet looks at the men behind the names on the World War Two Roll of Honour on Havant War Memorial Cross and at life in Havant during the war, as recorded in local newspapers. Several descendants and at least two surviving siblings of the fallen still live in the area and have generously contributed photos and accounts, which help to remind us of the effects of the war on those who were bereaved.

Two of these brothers were (Christopher) Paul and John Philip Wilkins, whose grandfather, Henry Gray Wilkins, built the War Memorial Cross after World War One. Some residents will remember the Wilkins family, who were architects in South Street, Havant. Paul, the last partner in the firm, lost his twenty-one year old brother John in 1941, when he was shot down over Benghazi, acting as a decoy while the rest of his squadron was mining the harbour. Paul was just sixteen years old at the time but in 1943 he volunteered to join the Army, which must have been an anxious time for his family. After being accepted for a commission Paul joined the Hampshire Regiment in Northampton. Eventually, after being sent to India, he joined the Royal West African Frontier Force and was posted to their Head Quarters in Burma. However, the Japanese soon capitulated and it was not long before Paul returned to the United Kingdom via Lagos.

The other known surviving brother came from a family with siblings who were born between 1922 and 1935. Kenneth Walter Ierston, the first born, went down with HMS *Hood* in 1941, when he was eighteen years old. His youngest brother was only six at the time but he has kept treasured photos of his brother in uniform. Kenneth, an Ordinary Seaman, is also named on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial on Southsea Common.

We should not forget that during the war there were twenty-seven civilian deaths through enemy action in the Havant and Waterloo Urban District, including eight in Havant and Bedhampton. Mrs Florence May Luff (38) of Hulbert Road, Bedhampton, was killed by a machine gun bullet on 8 October 1940 and Mary Anne Guy (65) and Linda Perry Koggell (72) died on 8

October 1940 at 26 Fourth Avenue, Denville. The bodies of Annie Frances Godman (79), Ethel Ripley (53) and Violet Gertrude Todd (52) were found in the wreckage of Petit Cottage, Southleigh Road, which was demolished on 5 December 1940, when twenty-five high explosive bombs and upwards of one hundred incendiaries landed on Bedhampton, Havant and Hayling between 19.00 and 20.30. Elizabeth Ann Wills (44) and her husband Herbert John Wills (48) of 1 The Cottage, Helmsley House, East Leigh Road, Havant, were killed on 17 April 1941, the day that Sinah Gun Site, on Hayling Island, was hit. Most of the twenty-seven deaths were on Hayling Island, as Langstone Harbour was used as a decoy area in an attempt to protect Portsmouth Dockyard. There was one death in Langstone Harbour and one at Lovedean.

If you can add to the story of Havant's Second World War please get in touch with me or The Spring Arts and Heritage Centre, Havant.

Ann Griffiths

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The battleship HMS *Royal Oak* was sunk at Scapa Flow on 14 October 1939 with the loss of 834 lives.

# Havant in the Second World War in Extracts from the *Hampshire Telegraph* with Related Research

Please note that each area of the Borough of Havant has its own war memorial. Therefore, these extracts are mainly confined to the Havant town centre area or apply to the whole of the Urban District of Havant and Waterloo, which was formed in 1932 and was divided into six wards. The 1939 Kelly's Directory describes Havant, itself, as having a well-attended weekly cattle and sheep market. The manufacture of leather is the main industry, the parchment works having closed in 1936.

**1.9.1939** – All the telephones in connection with the ARP service have been manned continuously since last Tuesday week. The electric railway power station and the gas company depot are sandbagged. Gas masks were distributed last September but some residents have not received their containers. Members of the British Legion's Section have offered themselves to the transfusion service for blood grouping tests and the first batch has been checked. Prayers are being said at St Faith's Church at noon and 7 pm each day during the crisis. There is a quiet confidence among the people. Volunteers are urgently needed at Havant for clerical assistance and telephoning. They should apply to the Town Hall.

**8.9.1939** – An Emergency Committee has been appointed to deal with matters affecting the district. A Food Committee has also been formed and Mrs Mylon, Mr Bide and Mr AW Thompson have been chosen to comprise the local Billeting Appeals Tribunal.

**22.9.1939** – Efforts are being made by the Havant and Waterloo Urban District Council to obtain the use of unoccupied land for allotments, as building development has slowed down and use might be made of undeveloped grassland.

**LOSS of HMS *ROYAL OAK* – 14 October 1939**

There are three men named on the Havant War Memorial Roll of Honour who went down with the ship – a black day for Havant. Also lost, and commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, were Chief Petty Officer Frank Rann of 8 Coastguard Cottages, Langstone, Havant, eldest son of Mr and Mrs F Rann, of Whippingham Post Office; PO Arthur Ernest Burden of Bedhampton and Supply Assistant Hubert John Cousins of 84 West Street, Havant. *Rann, who was 34, leaves a wife and two young children. He is the eldest of 12 children, and joined the Navy in 1922. Of Mr and Mrs Rann's nine*

sons, five are serving in the Services and another will be joining up shortly. On Monday Rann's parents received a letter from him saying what a peaceful war this was. See *Memorials and Monuments of the Isle of Wight* website.

**27.10.1939** – A number of people have been fined ten shillings each under the Lighting Restrictions Order. Several motorists have also been fined for not having their lights sufficiently obscured or their running boards painted white.

**3.11.1939** – Havant and Waterloo UDC has decided that tenants of council houses will be permitted to keep up to ten hens or pullets but that male birds will not be allowed. Poultry houses will have to be inspected by the Council Engineer and poultry-keeping should not cause a nuisance to neighbours.

**24.11.1939** – Havant Poppy Day Appeal. But for the petrol rationing the collection in Havant would have exceeded last year's record. Again organised by Mr J Loat it resulted in a total of £140 5s 6d, 10s below last year's amount. Street collections were up 50%, while the sale of poppy emblems for motor cars was down by about the same amount. A large parcel of woollen clothes and comforts for the soldiers has been despatched by Havant Sunshine League.

**1.12.1939** – Air raid shelters in Havant Park were described as more suitable for goldfish than human beings at this month's Council meeting, as they have to be continually pumped. Mr Midgely declared: *he would sooner walk about in the park if there were a thousand enemy planes overhead rather than go into these death traps.*

**18.12.1939** – Another ARP test was held and there was a good turnout. In one case a number of youthful casualties at Homewell were waiting so long to be dealt with as imprisoned gas cases that nearby residents supplied them with cups of tea.

**19.1.1940** – The sum of £25 has already been subscribed to the fund opened by the Clerk to the UDC to provide extra amenities and comforts for the ship's company of HMS *Havant*, and has been forwarded to the Commanding Officer. An appeal has been circulated to housewives for the knitting of gloves etc. [On 1st June 1940 HMS *Havant* was bomb damaged off Dunkirk with some loss of life. An attempt to tow it back to Dover was unsuccessful and it was sunk by gunfire from HMS *Saltash*. There is a window on the north side of St Faith's Church, Havant, commemorating her valiant service.]



HMS *Havant*.

**26.1.1940** – Loss of HMS *Grenville*. One of the victims was Ronald Victor Avery (22), a native of Grantham, who was engaged to Miss Frances Grant of Lymbourne Road, Havant. The date of the marriage had been arranged. [On 19th January HMS *Grenville* struck a mine and sank twenty-three miles east of the Kentish Knock Light Vessel. Seventy-five men were lost when the ship was blown in two.]

PO Hubert John Rogers (50), of 5 Western Road, Havant, has died at sea. Mrs Rogers received a letter which indicates that he met with an accident and was taken aboard a hospital ship suffering from head injuries which proved fatal. His two sons and two daughters are left in bereavement.

**2.2.1940** – Able Seaman Hubert Rogers, serving in the submarine branch of the Royal Navy, arrived home unexpectedly to find that his father [above] had been killed in an accident and was about to be buried.

**2.2.1940** – At the monthly meeting of the UDC the excessive cost and requirements of running the ARP service was discussed. Mr Handley-Derry thought that *anyone calling this an urban area would be laughed out of court* and that they were *unlikely to be deliberately bombed*.

**23.2.1940** – An air-raid casualty practice took place in the First Aid Post at Havant on Tuesday, when about ten 'victims' were attended to by Mrs Dewhurst. Dr MS Dewhurst was present as umpire. A variety concert was given at the NAAFI Institute, North Street, Havant, to an audience of soldiers and their friends. There was a capital programme of refined vocalism, choice comedy and high-class elocution.

**23.2.1940** – *Bravo, Welcome and Good Luck!* was the greeting extended to AB Peter Beach on the screen at the Havant cinema on Tuesday night. Beach had returned home from HMS *Cossack*, where he was one of the party who boarded the *Altmark* and released three hundred British sailors from the hell ship.

**15.3.1940** – A bridge drive held at Magnolia House and organised by Mrs P Davies obtained the sum of £8. This will be used to purchase wool to be knitted into comforts for the troops.

**21.3.1940** – Mr WG Hopkins, an upholsterer of The Pallant, Havant, was pushing a hand-cart along West Street when he was involved in a collision with an RAF lorry. The hand-cart was overturned and he received injuries to his face and hands. [During the war servicemen were often accused of driving too fast through the streets of Havant and there were numerous accidents.]

**21.3.1940** –The WVS HQ has given an ambulance to Havant. It was officially presented by Lady Iris Capell at the Havant ARP Depot and received on behalf of the Depot by Lt Cdr T Herriott JP.

**19.4.1940** – Able Seaman Peter Beach of Havant and his shipmate AB James Harper have been awarded the DSM for assisting in the release of 300 British sailors. During the Atlantic exploit, in pitch darkness, the cry *Man overboard!* was raised on the *Cossack* and the call went out *It's Lofty Beach!* A boat was lowered and the body was taken on board. It was only when the clothing was removed that it was realised that it was a German, so the man was put back into the sea with the appropriate ceremonial. Later, Beach appeared on deck very much alive.

**19.4.1940** – It has been learned that the captain of the destroyer *Zulu*, which sank a German submarine a few days ago, is Commander JS Crawford, who lives with his family at New Orchard, Meadowlands, near Green Pond, Havant.

**31.5.1940** – Sergeant FJ O'Mahony of the RAF had been reported missing, so it was a pleasant surprise when he reappeared in Havant at the weekend. He and three comrades were in a plane brought down in the early stages of the war over the Kiel Canal. They managed to get into a rubber boat, although wounded, and were eventually picked up by a neutral vessel. O'Mahony received shrapnel wounds to his leg and hip, from which he recovered, and he is now back on active service.

**21.6.1940** – A few days ago Private Sidney Tillman of the Hampshire Regiment arrived at his home, 4 Prince George Street, Havant, and told his



mother: *I had some narrow escapes from the German bombers and for three days and nights I was on the beach at Dunkirk. The Germans were repeatedly swooping and bombing and machine-gunning the place. On the fourth day I decided to swim for it. Luckily I was picked up by a destroyer and brought to England.* Tillman returned to his unit today.

**28.6.1940** – A shortage of private shelters was reported at the monthly Council meeting. This meant that it might be necessary to build some communal shelters. Approximately 3,700 shelters had been delivered to eligible households in the district and 3,000 had been sited. About 2,016 householders were carrying out their own erection, while 400 had asked the Council to erect them. 584 had refused shelters. People had been removing sand from Beachlands to cover their domestic shelters and it was agreed to allow this to continue, provided the manager's consent was first obtained.

**19.7.1940** – Sub-Lieutenant Michael Travers Marwood of HMS *Antelope*, who has been awarded the DSC, is the son of Mr Ralph K Marwood of North Close Cottage, Wade Court, and grandson of the late Paymaster Captain Ralph B Marwood, Royal Navy.



HMS *Tyne* 1951. Flagship of Rear Admiral PBRW William-Powlett. Flag Officer Destroyers, Mediterranean. Marwood was his Flag Lieutenant.

[Born in 1919 and still alive in 2013, Lt Cdr Marwood has kindly allowed me to use extracts of his text from the BBC WW2 People's War Archive, which describe his time as a navigating officer on the Atlantic Convoy.]

*On 9 February 1940, we picked up an echo, which was confirmed as a likely U Boat and we attacked with depth charges. There then followed a cat and*

*mouse skirmish that lasted several hours during which we actually picked up a second target. We attacked repeatedly. The U Boats cleverly took avoiding action and we lost contact. With an appropriate search pattern, we later re-established contact and continued attacking. Eventually, one U Boat was forced to the surface by further depth charges. As she broke surface there was a huge cheer from the upper deck of ANTELOPE to be quickly stifled as the U Boat manned her gun and started firing at us. We swiftly replied and her crew abandoned ship and the U Boat sank. We picked up most of the crew and made the officers honorary members of the wardroom mess. I lent one some clothing but I received little thanks. They thought we were mad. Later we learnt that the second U Boat, that we thought we had sunk, had escaped. We also learnt that the one we did sink was the U41 and that it had torpedoed a tanker of 8,090 tons and a steamer of 9,374 tons in convoy OA84. It was for my part in this battle of wits that I (among others) was awarded the DSC but the awards also recognised the huge strain we were under during those early war days. The Captain was awarded the DSO.*

**16.8.1940** – Havant's Local Defence Volunteers (now the Home Guard) has made rapid progress and the Battalion is a credit to the town. Its birth arose from a small gathering of Captain Wilkinson and his friends at his residence, following the earliest appeal for anti-parachutists. The personnel include a sprinkling of 'Old Contemptibles' and an effective blend of youths anxious to do their bit to defend their hearths and homes. Most prefer the initials LDV to HG, for they intend to give Hitler the 'LDV' [Look Duck and Vanish].

**20.9.1940** – A young soldier was found unconscious on the pavement near Havant Police Station on Saturday. He was conveyed by ambulance to the local hospital. He was only partly clothed, his overcoat, tunic, cap and boots being missing and the soles of his socks badly worn. He is being treated for extreme exposure. Later it was ascertained that he is George James Talbot of the Royal Artillery.

**8.11.1940** – Looking little the worse for wear after his terrible ordeal on the bombed liner *RMS Empress of Britain*, Steward Leonard George Jones, 18, the son of Mr and Mrs T Jones of 2 Selbourne Road, Havant, has arrived home. He told a news reporter:

*I heard an air-raid warning followed by a terrible crash. A bomb had exploded in the saloon. I had left my life-jacket there and luckily when I rushed back I found it. The staircase had been blown away and I managed to find a way onto E Deck, where I helped close the watertight doors.*

*Amidst all the drama the crockery man said, 'Well, at least I won't have to make the usual return of broken china.' The top deck was ablaze and we all helped women and children into the lifeboats. Many slid down the fire hose into the boats. I got down with a little girl above me, in case she lost her hold. Her mother let go of the hose as her hands got scorched, and fell into the boat, but her elder daughter was drowned. We then rowed round picking people up. The ship's doctor worked like a hero and amputated injured limbs while the lifeboat was tossing about in heavy seas. The chief gun-layer, a Portsmouth man, received a broken arm.*

Leonard's brother is Lance Corporal Tom Jones of the Dragoon Guards. His father is an ex-chief gunner of the Royal Marines, now employed at an RAF aerodrome.

**6.12.1940** – During last week 981 copies of Daphne du Maurier's latest book *Come Wind, Come Weather*, were sold at the Empire Cinema, Havant. The royalties have been given to the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association.



**3.1.1941** – Born at Leigh Cottages 72 years ago, Mr Arthur Lemm of 19 Crossway passed away and was buried at the local cemetery. His death was the second bereavement suffered by his daughter, Mrs Lebbon, who lost her husband on active service a month ago.

**3.1.1941** – A fire-fighting contingent, to deal with incendiary bombs, has been formed by Captain FT Cowell of Wade Court. Nearly fifty members have been enrolled.

**28.2.1941** – At the recent UDC meeting concern was expressed over the excessive rents being charged by council house tenants who had taken in refugees from Portsmouth. In one case £3 a week was being charged for two rooms. The UDC would publish protective measures to prevent overcharging.

**7.3.1941** – Steady progress is being made with the formation of fire-watching parties and already Havant's four main streets have been covered.

**7.3.1941** – PO Frederick Sheppard RN (34) of North Street, Havant, has been decorated with the DSM for the gallant part he played in the second attack on Narvik while serving aboard HMS *Icarus*, which led the destroyers. He said:

*We were making for Narvik when we saw a German warship blocking the bottleneck between two small islands. She opened fire but was out of range. I had the greatest thrill of my life when a shot from my gun hit the enemy fair and square. Then we took another enemy vessel and once again I scored a direct hit. My gun helped to sink at least two enemy vessels. When two torpedoes made straight for our ship our Captain manoeuvred the ship so skilfully that the torpedoes passed harmlessly by.*

**21.3.1941** – Fred Baker, a player for Havant Rovers Football Club, has been seriously wounded while serving in the Army but is making good progress and may be able to leave hospital in a week or so. He had a narrow escape from death.

**28.3.1941** – At this month's UDC meeting Mr Rogers suggested that due to the shortage of allotments they should allow the southern part of Havant Park to be used. Mr Gauntlett replied that there was no need as Mr Lucas had offered six acres just north of the park.

**4.4.1941** – Ministry of Information films were shown in Havant Drill Hall yesterday week. They included *Britain can Take It*, *The Londoner*, *Now You're Talking* and *The Fire Bomb*. [Some of these public information films can be seen on the British Pathé website.]

**4.4.1941** – David Packham of Langstone wrote to the *Hampshire Telegraph* saying: *The Havant Park railings should be removed, as scrap metal is a vital armament necessity. These railings, melted down and turned into tanks and guns, would be rendering service to humanity instead of just lamentably disfiguring the otherwise picturesque park.*

**10.4.1941** – Official information has been received that Ted Dridge, the well-known local footballer, who was earlier reported missing while serving as a leading gunner with the RN, is now presumed killed. It is understood that he was the only fatal casualty aboard [SS *Ardanbhan*] the ship in which he was serving.

**25.4.1941** – A holiday resort on the South Coast was the scene of a ferocious attack during a several hours raid by enemy bombers. They were received by a heavy barrage and flying at a great height dropped flares, many hundreds of incendiaries, and explosives of high calibre, causing damage to property and shops. Among those killed was Mr R Page, who was on duty as a fire-watcher. All branches of the Civil Defence Service and the ARP sections worked hard with amazing courage and greatly minimised the evil effects of the heavy raid. [This clearly refers to 17th April, when the South Hayling gun

site was bombed, killing six gunners.] One firewatcher, who had not been issued with a steel helmet was cycling about wearing a bowler hat. Three pieces of shrapnel pierced the hat, cutting his head, but after receiving treatment he resumed his duties. [Some thirty seriously wounded casualties, including Marines stationed at Hayling, were treated in Havant by doctors such as Dr Jim Ricketts, whose son has written a book about his father's wartime experiences in Havant and the Adriatic, entitled *Stretchers Not Available*.]

**6.6.1941** – Killed in action [HMS *Sheffield*] against the *Bismarck* on 29th May 1941, Lieutenant Brian Hawksward Brooks RN, only son of Howard Brooks Rothsay of Havant, and husband of Patricia, née Nevill-Wright, of Bosham. [Brian and Pamela were married in 1940.]

**11.7.1941** – Sergeant Pilot Charles Snook RAF of Elmwood, Leigh Road, Havant, and Sergeant David Grange Young RAF (24) of 1 Connaught Road, Havant, are now prisoners of war in Germany. Sergeant Young is the son of Mr and Mrs HF Young, who are closely associated with the Congregational Church. A letter from him stated that Young had recovered from a wounded leg, which he received when his plane was brought down. Fortunately he landed on a hay-rick, which broke his fall. He had been transferred from the convalescent ward to a camp where there were other members of the crew and was being fairly well treated. Charles Snook's sister had received a letter at Havant, saying that when he bailed out he was suffering burns to the hands but that he had now recovered. Snook was a popular member of the Avenue Lawn Tennis Club in Havant.

**18.7.1941** – Mr and Mrs HF Young of Connaught Road, Havant, have received a letter from their son, Staff Sergeant DC Young RAF, who is now a prisoner of war in Germany. He had received a Red Cross parcel which, he writes: *Will supplement the wholesome but not excessive Reich diet*. Young added that he had recovered from a leg injury caused when he bailed out of his plane but needed to be examined by a specialist for another physical injury.

**5.8.1941** – The Council minutes stated that the general public would not be allowed on Hayling beach, except for that portion due south between Alexandra Avenue and Bound lane and that notices had been published in the district. A letter from Southern Railway set out proposed arrangements with regard to the use of the railway bridge for the conveyance of fire equipment to Hayling Island, should road access be unavailable due to an emergency.

**12.8.1941** – 123a West Street was to be used by the WRVS for the storage of clothing from Canada.

**14.10.1941** – A 12hp car had been bought for £75 for use as a Council staff car. The committee recommended that a lady driver be found.

**21.11.1941** – A letter has been received by Mrs Penford of North Street, Havant, Her son, Corporal Leonard Mervyn Penford (27), was sailing east when the transport called at Cape Town. The soldiers were entertained to tea by several residents and Miss Dunthorne, who invited Penford and others to her house, wrote to Mrs Penford saying: *As I know you are all rationed with tea I am sending you a tin containing two pounds, which I hope you will accept.* [See 27.3.1942.]

**5.12.1941** – Mrs Brian has received a letter from her son Daniel Brian of HMS *Aurora*, which refers to the achievement of the ship in sinking several enemy vessels. *No doubt you have heard about our action, it was a marvellous firework display. It must have given old 'Musso' a headache and also the crews of his ships. I would not like to be in their shoes.*



HMS *Aurora* was a light cruiser built in Portsmouth Dockyard. She was launched in August 1936 by Lady Fisher, the wife of Admiral 'Jackie' Fisher.

***The Times* 21.12.1941** – Captain Maurice Woodforde Scott, Second Special Air Service Regiment, is officially reported missing in Western Europe. Any news would be welcomed by his wife at St Cross, Oaklands Road, Havant. [Fortunately he survived and after the war he enrolled in Wells Theological College and was ordained in 1949. He was made Honorary Canon of

Winchester Cathedral in 1975 until his partial retirement in 1980. He died in 1983.]

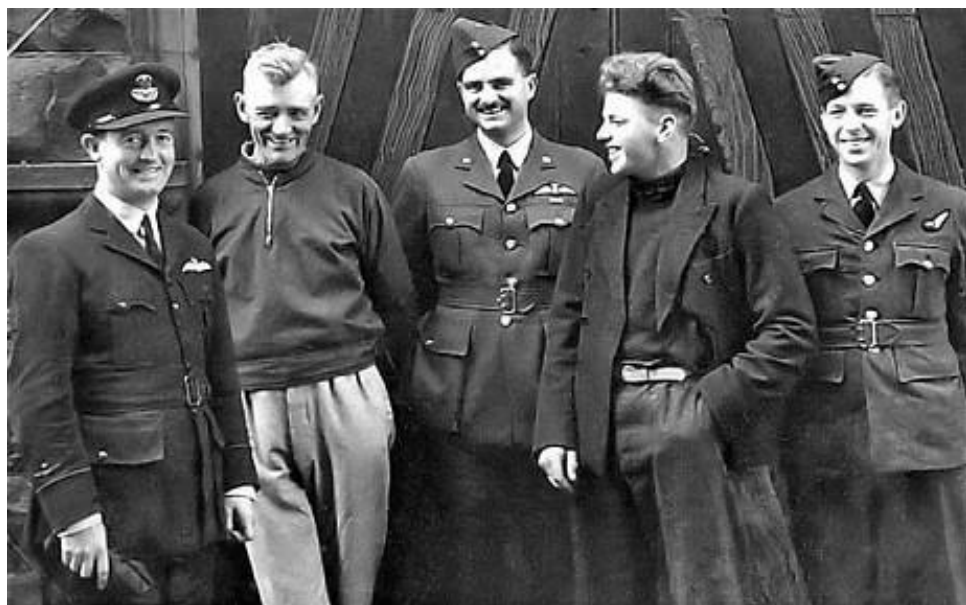
**9.1.1942** – In accordance with a circular from the Ministry of Health, regarding a change in the system of reserved occupations, Havant and Waterloo UDC is reviewing its staff so that as many as possible may be released for National Service.

**20.2.1942** – An interesting series of films under the auspices of the Ministry of Information was shown in the Legion Hall, Havant. The films depicted the RAF in action. They included *Review of 1941*, *The Heart of Britain* and *Life in The Soviet Union*.

**13.3.1942** – A parade of members of the Forces and Civil Defence personnel marked the opening of Havant and Waterloo Warship Week on Saturday. Vice-Admiral Sir William J Wentworth, Second Sea Lord, took the salute as the procession marched past St Faith's Church. The aim was to raise £210,000 to provide the hull of a destroyer. The total amount raised up to Wednesday night was £102,956, out of which Emsworth raised £20,718. [By late March £181,325 had been collected with a few small sums still to come in.]

**20.3.1942** and **23.7.1943** – Flying Officer Kenneth W Tarrant RAFVR, of Castle Avenue, Havant, was recently decorated by HM the King with the Distinguished Flying Cross for the part he played in the raid on Ålesund last October when, as captain of a Hudson aircraft, he bombed a 2,000-ton merchant vessel despite heavy Ack-Ack opposition, hitting it amidships and blowing it up. He then attacked a fish factory with incendiary bombs and machine-gunned motor transport and Ack-Ack posts. In this raid, stated to be the most successful carried out by a single squadron of the RAF, no fewer than seven ships and two factories were hit. Two nights later Tarrant hit a rock in a fjord, in darkness. He managed to pull the aircraft up, with the cabin flooded and the underside of the aircraft stove in. Unable to get rid of the bombs and after a very hazardous journey a successful belly landing was made in Scotland, the aircraft skidding along on its load of bombs, which fortunately did not explode.

Kenneth Tarrant died at Hayling in 2011. His obituary is in *The Daily Telegraph* of 9th May 2011 His daughter told me that he enlisted in the RAFVR for 5 years on 31.5.39. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross on 21.11.41 and the Bar on 9.2.43.



Kenneth Tarrant (centre) with two of his crew and rescued seamen. *(Photograph courtesy of his daughter Susan Rawbone.)*

**27.3.1942** – Mrs Penford of 45 North Street has received official information that her son Lance-Sergeant Joffre Penford (24) is missing in Malaya. He had served in the Havant Territorials before the war. [Joffre's father was the late Mervyn Penford, saddler, who died at Havant in 1931. Joffre, himself, survived the war and died in 2010 at Donnington, aged 92.] *(Photograph courtesy of Valerie Penford.)*



**27.3.1942** – Chief Stoker Robert Annandale Royal Navy is also officially missing, presumed killed, from HMS *Barham*. His sister-in-law lives at Eastleigh Farm, Havant. [Robert died 25th November 1941; see Portsmouth Naval Memorial. He was the son of James and Jane Annandale and husband of Laura Elizabeth Annandale, formerly Mrs Bessie Newton of Langstone.]



**10.4.1942** – After they narrowly escaped death or capture, two Havant brothers are now safe. Leading Seaman Jack Hill (26) was a crew member of HMS *Barham* when she was sunk. He had gone on deck with a cup of tea, to allow it to cool. He dived overboard and clung to a raft, being picked up by a rescue ship after forty-five minutes. In diving thirty feet from the sinking ship he injured his shoulder. His brother, Sergeant Bert Hill (23), was serving in Malaya. Due to problems associated with childhood infantile paralysis he was placed in a hospital ship shortly before the Fall of Singapore and safely reached a hospital in India. Another brother, Frank (39), is a corporal in the RAF. The three brothers are the sons of Mr and Mrs F Hill of School Road, Havant, and former pupils of the Church of England School. Their father served in the last war.

**22.5.1942** – Havant cinema was filled with Civil Defence personnel on Sunday morning, when a special programme of films dealing with bombs was shown. An address was given by a bomb disposal squad.

**29.5.1942** – A contract has been placed with Messrs P Hudson of Portsmouth by the Ministry of Works for the removal of unnecessary railings in this urban area. Owners will be given 24 hours' notice so that they can claim compensation and have their railings weighed.

**5.6.1942** – Mrs Sturtridge has been elected president of the Congregational Women's War Service Legion. During the past year 50 meetings have been held and 100 camouflage nets made for the services. Over 150 garments have been collected and repaired or remade and distributed to needy people in Portsmouth, Southampton and Poplar.

**12.6.1942** – Havant and Waterloo Penny-a-Week Red Cross Fund has passed the £1,000 mark. [The money went towards the provision of food parcels for those serving overseas, including prisoners of war.]

**26.6.1942** – Mr Robert Wilfrid Chater, a former resident of Havant, has spent the last 18 years in Sarawak. He was on the Civil Service staff in Kuching when the Japs arrived. At 11 a.m. on 23rd December 1941 he set off in his car, dressed in a suit of white drill, leaving all his possessions behind and accompanied by his son Wilfred John. After travelling about 40 miles they abandoned the car by a river bank, having first disabled it. They joined five other men who were going down the river in a prahu [canoe] but after shooting several rapids the craft became damaged. Dodging the Japanese planes in daytime and sleeping in dayaks, where friendly natives gave them rice and coffee, father and son lost count of time spent in the jungle. At last they reached the Dutch border, where the police gave Mr Chater some clean

clothing, namely two women's vests, two women's tennis shirts and a pair of khaki shorts. A plane was chartered for the men and they had a thrilling ride through the Sunda Strait with the Japs very busy overhead. After disembarking in Perth the Chaters eventually reached Sydney, where Wilfred joined up. By the time Mr Chater reached Scotland, via the South Pole, he had travelled some 20,000 miles. [Robert Chater was living at 26 Ingledene Close, Bedhampton, when he died in 1946, aged sixty-nine.]

**3.7.1942** – The UDC is to protest to the Ministry of Supply regarding the alleged way in which railings and gates were pulled down or cut away, with stubs left lying about for several days before being removed. Mr Powell asked why the railings around the old Parish Church, which were of historic interest, had been taken away, while those around a more modern church of a different denomination had been left untouched.

**7.8.1942** – Major Mark Gilchrist Gregson of the Royal Artillery, officially reported as killed in action in the Middle East, was the husband of Christine Rozel Pigot Gregson, only daughter of the late Admiral Hugh Pigot Williams of Havant. [Christine was born in 1910 and brought up at Bedhampton Manor.]

**09.10.1942** – AB Wilbert Dark (18) of HMS *Somali*, which was lost on its return voyage after assisting in getting the big convoy through to Russia, recently arrived at his home, 9 Park Way, Havant. A former pupil of Havant Council School he had served in *Somali* for nearly three years, having joined her from a training establishment. His father is Sergeant Major 'Bert' Dark, who served in the last war, as well as this one. When *Somali* was torpedoed young Dark joined the volunteer party which went aboard the crippled ship. He said that despite heavy seas they kept her in tow for two days but on the third day she broke in two and Dark was flung into the water. *I managed to hold onto an anchor, which had been used for the towing operation. After about fifteen minutes I was grabbed by the hair and pulled aboard a trawler. I lost everything but I feel little the worse for wear.*

**30.10.1942** – Sergeant William F Waite RAFVR of Havant, who came down in the sea in darkness when returning from a raid, was picked up by a German seaplane. Writing from a POW camp, to a friend, he said: *I'm down but not out.*

**30.10.1942** – Mr Rayner of Havant was driving near the Sussex border when he was machine-gunned by a raider. He had a narrow escape, as bullets pierced his car and one passed just behind his head.

**11.12.1942** – Norman Shoesmith, an ordnance artificer in the Royal Navy, is missing believed killed aboard one of the ships which took part in the Allied landings on the North African coast. He is the son of the late William J Shoesmith, who died in a road accident early this year, and Mrs Shoesmith of 27 St George's Avenue. A former Manor House and Mile End House pupil he entered the dockyard as an apprentice. He was a fine athlete. [Norman died 15.11.1942 when HMS *Avenger* was hit by a torpedo and the ship sank within two minutes. See Portsmouth Naval Memorial.]

**11.12.1942** – Several members of the Havant Magisterial Bench have joined the Forces. Steps are being taken towards the appointing of two new magistrates, one of whom will be a woman, as such a choice would be an advantage to the Juvenile and Domestic Courts.

**1.1.1943** – Mrs Penford has received a photo and Christmas message from her son Leonard, who is serving in the Middle East. His father died some years ago without fully recovering from the effects of the last war and his brother is a prisoner of war in Malaya. Leonard's message was the same as that sent by his father in WW1 and is worded: *On Christmas Day where'er you be, with whom you be remember me.*

**1.1.1943** – The Roads and Works Committee reported that the National Fire Service [formed in 1941] was desirous of deepening the Homewell Spring and were prepared to protect the area with light fencing. There was no objection to the former but there was some concern that fencing off the spring would deprive people of their right to take water from it. It was also noted that queues for the cinema were two or three deep and that pedestrians had to walk into the road to pass the queue.

**23.3.1943** – Killed in action in North Africa, on 26th February 1943, John Dennis Cave RA [Old Pauline] aged 27; beloved husband of Peggy, Pendower, Beechworth Road, Havant and elder son of Mr and Mrs Dennis Cave of Ealing. *All our thoughts go onward with you.* [**See 3.11.1944**]

**1.5.1943** – Mr GA Day of Woodfield, Langstone, informed the UDC that he would allow the free use of the land adjoining his house to be used as wartime allotments. The UDC accepted the offer and authorised the engineer to plough up the land and grow vegetables for the use of the British Restaurant.

**11.6.1943** – Sergeant Albert James Hill (24) has arrived home at Havant after a lucky escape from the Japanese. He was serving in an anti-tank battery in Thailand and saw a Japanese mortar hit an army vehicle, killing one of the

crew but leaving a Havant chum uninjured. Then Hill was struck with fever and taken to hospital, where another Havant pal, Harry Brown, was in the next bed. The Japanese captured the hospital but luckily Hill had been transferred to another hospital three hours earlier. Sergeant Hill has now been invalided out of the Army and is looking for a job.

**11.6.1943** – Edna Boxall of Crossway, Havant, sacrificed her thirteenth birthday cake by offering it for competition on behalf of the *Wings for Victory Week*. It was won by Mrs Pilkington of Langstone after bringing in the sum of £7 10s. Edna's brother, Brian, organised an open-air side show which raised another £3.

**2.7.1943** – General Sir Claude Auchinleck, newly appointed Commander-in-Chief, India, [his second tenure], formerly lived at the corner of Southleigh Road, near the Green Pond. [His support for Slim's Fourteenth Army played an important role in its success.]

**9.7.1943** – Mrs Ethel Longcroft of Langstone Lodge was fined £2 with 9s costs for using her car to shop in Havant, when she could have used public transport. She was represented by her husband, Charles EB Longcroft, who pleaded not guilty. PC Bulley had ascertained from her driver that Mrs Longcroft was shopping. She allegedly said to the police officer: *I am in order. Who put you on to me? If you are a new one here and you upset us you will soon be gone from here.* Mr Longcroft said that his wife was entitled to travel to Havant once a week to visit her invalid sister at Warblington but PC Bulley said that the order had been cancelled.

**23.7.1943** – More than one hundred airmen, merchant seamen and civilians have been rescued in the Atlantic in just over six months by a Fortress Squadron of Coastal Command. The squadron's first rescue laurels were won by Flight Lt KW Tarrant DFC\*, of Havant. He and an Australian colleague spotted a lifeboat and four rafts carrying forty-four survivors. Tarrant radioed their position, dropped supplies in parachute bags, made buoyant with Mae Wests, and the survivors were rescued the next day.

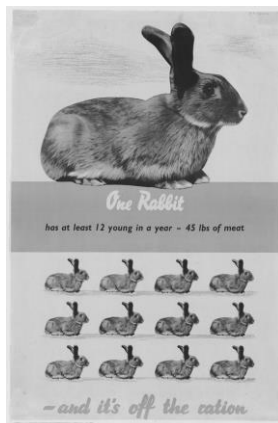
**23.7.1943** – Fines and costs totalling £80 were imposed on Frederick Vine, butcher of North Street, Havant, who was summoned on eight counts of recklessly furnishing false information regarding points coupons. Vine had 536 registered customers and was carrying on his mother's business single-handed during the war. He would count the coupons on Saturday and take them to the Food Office on Monday. Mr Glanville, prosecuting, said that between February and June 1943 eight instances had been revealed in which the number on the envelope did not tally with the number of coupons inside,

there being a discrepancy of over a hundred. The total shortage of coupons against the number declared was 1,428.

**6.8.1943** – The fête in aid of British prisoners of war, was held at Woodfield, Langstone, the home of Mr and Mrs GA Day. Among the attractions was the *Victory Garden Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Show*, organised by the recently formed Havant Allotment Association. There were more than 270 entries and a cup was awarded to Mr E Carter for the best kept and most productive allotment. There was a beauty queen contest, a baby show and a fancy dress parade.

**13.8.1943** – *The Havant Domestic Rabbit Club* held its first show at Woodfield on Saturday as part of the Victory Garden Week, in aid of the Red Cross Prisoners of War Fund. It attracted 250 entries from as far away as Surrey.

One Rabbit has at least 12 young in a year – 45 lbs of meat – and it's off the ration



**20.8.1943** – The ban regarding restricted sea front areas of the South Coast began operating at noon on 17th August. Police vehicles toured the area with loud speakers, announcing that all members of the public must leave the sea front and immediate vicinity at once, and those without special permits or temporary passes must go outside the barriers. This includes boarding house and hotel guests who are not here for an approved purpose. No more visitors may be accepted. There has been a continuous demand for permits and temporary passes. Persons who are in the area without authority are liable to prosecution, and on conviction to a penalty of three month's imprisonment, a fine of £100, or both. All persons must carry ID cards and produce them on demand by the police or military. They must not carry binoculars without a permit.

**20.8.1943** – Mrs Judd, the WVS County Organiser, visited Havant to open the new office at 7 West Street, Havant.

**03.9.1943** – In connection with Havant's adoption of HMS *Oribi*, Mr Boscott, manager of the local cinema, said that an Oribi is like a gazelle and provides a

very tasty meal. *I used to see a lot of them when I was serving in the Sudan.* Mr Boscott has given his souvenir pair of Oribi antlers to the local savings committee.

**17.9.1943** – The Chairman of the Red Cross Victory Gardens Week announced that a cheque for £875 had been sent to the Prisoner of War Fund. This is enough to supply 1,750 parcels for our boys, which makes the work well worthwhile.

**1.10.1943** – A United Service was held in Havant cinema to commemorate the Battle of Britain victory. It included representatives of the Civil Defence, Red Cross, Scouts and Guides and other war workers. An address was given on the glorious achievements of the RAF and Civil Defence, and the British Legion Band accompanied the hymns. The collection was for the RAF Benevolent Fund.

**12.11.1943** – Having been taken prisoner in North Africa eleven months ago and taken to a camp in Italy, Charles Parham, of the Hampshire Regiment, has managed to escape to Switzerland. This news was received by his parents of 119 West Street, Havant. Mr Parham senior, who still suffers from a disability received in the last war, said that he had not heard from his son since Italy but had never lost hope. **[See 3.11.1944]**

**12.11.1943** – Flying Officer J Baldock has addressed a meeting of the National Savings Committee at Havant. He was in Paris when war broke out and managed to get away just before the Germans overran it. Making his way to Spain and Portugal he came to England. *As the Germans had captured my best car, which I had to leave in Paris, I thought I had good reason for having a smack at the Huns, so I joined up with a fighter squadron.*

**The Times 21.3.1944** – Banned Coastal Belt. For reasons of operational security an area about ten miles in depth, between The Wash and Cornwall, will become a protected area from 1st April 1944, the effect of which is to prohibit non-residents from entering these areas. If you live in a protected area you must carry an ID card; binoculars and telescopes may not be used. There will be certain exceptions, including service personnel and persons needing to visit their parents. [The urban district of Havant and Waterloo was included and Hayling, which was used for a D-Day practice landing, known as *Operation Fabius*, was pretty well a 'no-go' area.]

**24.3.1944** – Sergeant Lawrence Adkin joined up about 20 months ago, aged 19, and gained his navigator's post within a short time. He had intended to join the Army but when enemy planes dropped a bomb, destroying four

bungalows opposite his Havant home (also damaged by the blast), he promptly joined the RAFVR. His father, ex-Corporal LV Adkins, was awarded the Military Medal for bravery on the field of France in WW1 and is now serving as a nurse in a southern hospital. Sergeant Adkin was recently reported missing and seven days later his parents received the following letter, which was with his personal possessions. Most of Sergeant Adkin's friends remember him as 'Ginger', the smiling butcher's boy. **See Havant War Memorial Roll of Honour.**

*Dear Mum and Dad*

*By the time you receive this letter you will have received word from the Air Ministry that I am missing, believed killed, on operations. I do not want you to be too upset about this. After all I may be a prisoner of war. Even if you do not hear any news of me for many months do not despair. If I should have been killed do not grieve too much over me; after all I have died doing a job that had to be done; that is, trying to make this country a decent place to live in and doing away with all the evil that Germany and the Nazis stand for.*

*I really enjoyed my job and although I must admit that there were times when I was a little scared I must say I was really proud of being allowed the honour of serving my country. I don't think I have any more to say, Mum and Dad, except to ask you once more not to grieve for me*

*Your ever loving son,*

*Laurie*

*P.S. I wrote this letter just before operations and have left it in my personal belongings, so that you will receive it should I be posted missing.*

**31.3.1944** – Any news regarding W Manning AB P/JX325297, missing presumed killed in HMS *Penelope*, will be gratefully received by Miss J McCann 5 Elm Lane, Havant.

HMS *Penelope* was on her way to replenish ammunition when she was hit by an acoustic torpedo fired from U410 thirty-five miles west of Naples. She sank ten minutes after a second attack from the same U-boat caused a large explosion. William Alfred Manning was one of 415 of the ship's company to be lost on 18th February 1944. 250 survivors were rescued by landing craft. William was the son of William and Edith Manning of Holloway and is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial.

**21.4.1944** – A choir of coloured American Army men impressed a large congregation by their tuneful renderings of negro spirituals in the Havant Congregational Church on Wednesday. Songs included 'Gospel Train' and the quartet consisted of Privates Jake Jones, Charlie Little, Jarvis Little and James McDonald. During the interval a short fraternal address was given by an American soldier. Afterwards the visitors were entertained to tea by the Young People's Fellowship in the Market Lane Hall. **2.6.1944** – The American soldiers performed in Havant Park during 'Salute the Soldier Week'. During this week the people of Havant and Bedhampton invested £51,043 in savings, just short of the target of £67,000.

**26.5.1944** – 'Rookery Nook', the Ben Travers farce, was performed at Havant Drill Hall on Tuesday by the local amateur dramatic society, in connection with 'Salute the Soldier Week'. Mr SR Luxford, the producer, played the leading role of Gerald Hopkiss. On behalf of the War Savings Committee Mr AE Madgwick tendered thanks to all those who had performed.

**9.6.1944** – After the feverish activity and tense anticipation of the past few weeks 'D-Day' passed extraordinarily quietly and strangely peacefully in this south coast area.

**11.8.1944** – A united divine service was held in Havant Park in connection with the local Red Cross Victory Garden Week. A collection was made on behalf of the Prisoner of War Fund. A fête took place in Mr Marshall's meadow in aid of Victory Garden Week and attracted a large crowd. Also, The Avenue Players presented the farcical comedy *Indoors Fireworks* at the Drill Hall, Havant. **15.9.1944** – It was announced that £620 6s 6d had been raised, excluding the proceeds from the horse show and gymkhana.

**18.8.1944** – Frances Florance was committed for trial at Swansea on a charge of marrying William Ames Haynes bigamously. Robert Florance, a soldier of Clarendon Road, Havant, was similarly committed, accused of counselling her and procuring her to commit the offence. It was alleged that about three years ago Robert Florance went overseas to serve in the Forces and that in October 1943 Frances and Haynes went through a form of marriage [in Swansea]. As a result certain money was paid to Frances as though she were Haynes' wife. [The outcome was that Haynes was sent to prison for nine months for bigamy, the judge finding that bigamy was far too common in time of war.]

**15.9.1944** – The Havant detachment of the Army Cadet Force has opened a sports and social club in the old Union buildings in Havant, for the benefit of their members. Facilities for billiards and table tennis and a library are



provided. The club was opened by Major RC Thwaytes. Members of other similar youth groups will be welcomed.

**22.9.1944** – A Havant soldier, who is serving in northern France, has appealed for a mandolin for which his mates are prepared to sacrifice three hundred Liberation Army francs. [As a result a mandolin was donated by a local resident.]

**22.9.1944** – Playing his part with an armoured corps in the north European offensive Lance Corporal Raymond Sisley, son of Mr and Mrs Wilfred Sisley of Fairfield Road, Havant, has revealed in a letter home how deeply grateful are the population in the liberated areas through which he has passed. *I never thought we would get so many kisses and handshakes. The people bring us flowers, fruit and biscuits and have even managed to arrange for us to have hot baths tonight.* [See 4.5.1945]

**29.9.1944** – The UDC has decided to endorse a recommendation by the Roads and Works Committee to apply for an allocation of fifty factory made houses to be erected on land at Stockheath.

**27.10.1944** – The first Havant WAAF to be attached to the main HQ of the Allied Expeditionary Air Forces in the war zone is LACW Molly Hedley of Maycroft, Boundary Way, a former pupil of St Joseph's School, Havant. A few days ago she was ordered abroad at six hours' notice and in a letter home she says: *The shops open until quite late but you need bags of money to buy anything. A nightdress costs £40!*

**27.10.1944** – In September Major J Stephen made available two acres of land on the Wade Court estate for a scout camp site. The site was opened by the County Commissioner for Rovers, Mr Charles Steward. The occasion was marked by a weekend camp, attended by scouts from a wide area, and Holy Communion was celebrated in Langstone Chapel. The streams provide opportunities for pioneering, bridge-building and aerial runways. Axemanship, tree felling and logging can also be practised. The scouts have cleared several camp sites, erected a flagstaff, laid out a camp fire circle and are engaged in building a log cabin.

**3.11.1944** – Mrs Eunice Peggy Cave, now a nursing officer in a forward hospital in Burma, is the daughter of Mr and Mrs Parkin of Pendower, Beechworth Road, Havant. Her husband was killed in Tunisia. A London solicitor, he had become a gunner and married Peggy, a 'Barts' trained nurse, on his embarkation leave. Within a few weeks of his death she volunteered for service abroad and was sent to Kenya, Ceylon and finally India. Now she

lives in a small tent lit with a hurricane lamp. Long, thatched, side-less 'bashas' are the wards, and casualties come from the front by air and by ambulances, which lurch along roads behind the fighting areas.

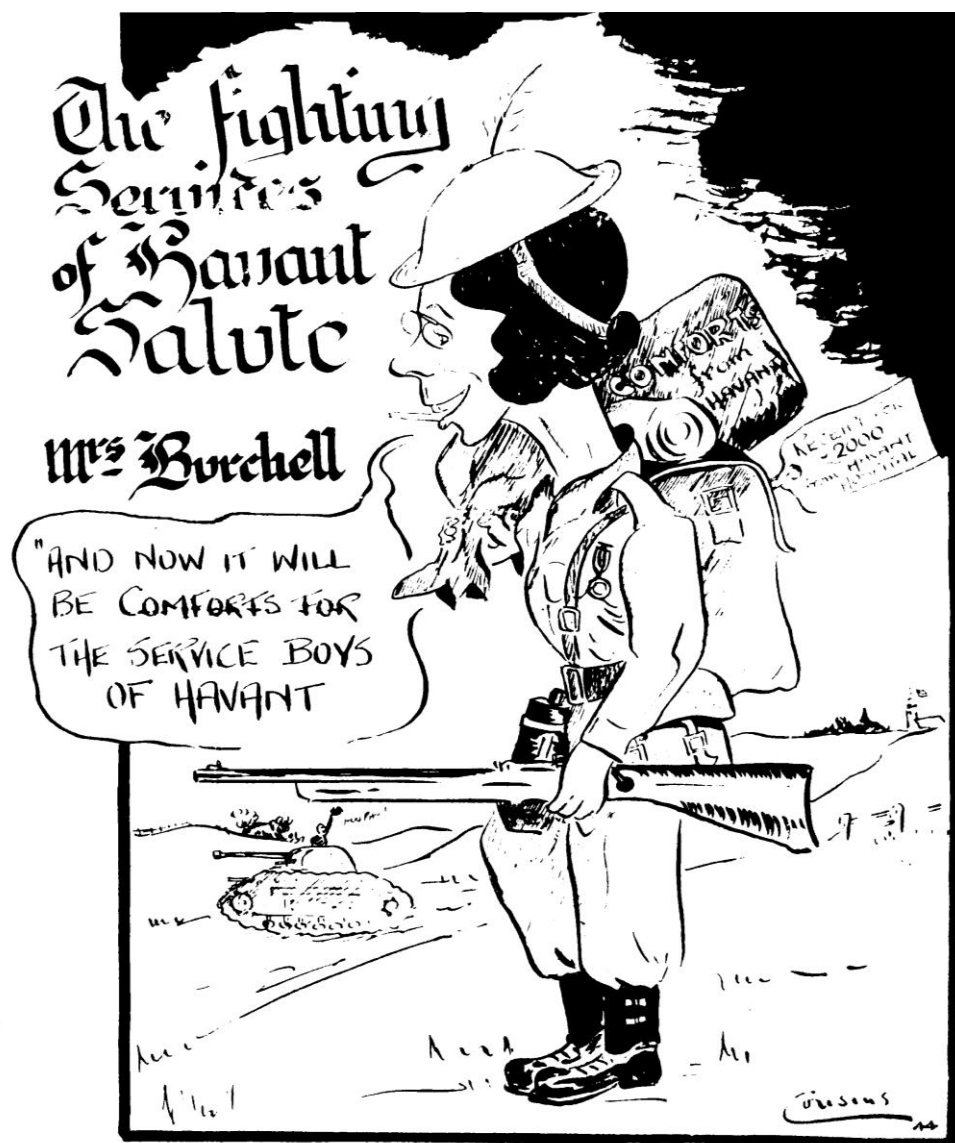
**3.11.1944** – Union Jacks in the garden and a *Welcome Home* sign in red, white and blue on the mantelpiece, greeted Private Parham [25] on his safe arrival at his parents' home in West Street, Havant. He was taken prisoner by the Germans at Tebourba in North Africa and conveyed by plane to Italy in December 1942. He was in three POW camps before he succeeded in making his way to Switzerland, where he was generously treated as an internee. Private Parham said that a good number of the Italian men were willing to make a bid for the 1,500 lire reward for recapturing any British or American soldier but the women were more humane and tried to help. [Tebourba was the location of a battle in the Tunisia Campaign lasting from November 29th until December 4th 1942. The Royal Hampshire Regiment held the town for several days until it fell to the Germans in December.]

**24.11.1944** – Concern has been expressed by the UDC at the amount of land Portsmouth is buying in the urban area. Captain AE Jones said: *They are carrying the Union Jack with one hand and strangling their neighbours with the other. How can we live as a local government authority with so little land?*

**24.11.1944** – Two Havant brothers, Private Hubert Chaffer (34) of the RASC and Corporal Alfred Chaffer (28), whose parents live in Elmleigh Road, Havant, have met in the same battle area in the Central Mediterranean. Hubert, formerly the proprietor of a hairdressing salon in North Street, refers in a letter home to the difficulties facing our forces in northern Italy but says they are doing a good job.

**1.12.1944** – A few months ago Mrs Burchell established a 'Comforts Fund' for Havant's serving men and women. She has received over one hundred letters of thanks. Trooper R Grant, who is in NW Europe, writes: *Your cigarettes are the first gift I have received and I am pleased to know that they come through the efforts of my own home town.*

[Edith Burchell 1881–1970. Edith Burchell was the daughter of Harry and Mary Ann Outen and was born in Havant. By 1889 her father, formerly a railway guard, was a beer retailer at the *Speed the Plough* public house in South Street. In 1901 Edith married Thomas Henry Burchell, a fellmonger, at St Faith's Church, Havant. The 1911 census shows Thomas (32) and Edith (29) living at 41 North Street with their two children but by the 1920s they were living at 13 Prince George Street, where Edith continued to live after she was widowed in 1947.



A poster drawn by Basil Cousins to support the whist drives Mrs Burchell ran to raise money for her 'Comforts Fund for the Service Boys of Havant'.

Sadly, Edith's younger brother, Ernest Outen, was lost on the Somme in September 1916, aged 30. This may have been the catalyst that caused Edith to fundraise so tirelessly for at least thirty years for the Havant War Memorial Hospital and for 'comforts' for soldiers serving abroad in wartime.

Basil Cousins, an amateur cartoonist, was the uncle of Ralph Cousins, the editor of this booklet. Ralph is also a cousin of Edith Burchell's on his mother's side.]

**5.1.1945** – Before the old year closed and brought to an end the activities of the First Aid Post in Fairfield Road a farewell party was held. During the period the Post has been functioning 25 air raid casualties and 50 military and 437 civilian casualties have been dealt with. In addition a scabies clinic was held twice a week at which 500 cases were treated. The Savings Group saved £5,292 8s, £112 being collected for the Red Cross Penny-a-Week Fund.



**12.1.1945** – *Dick Whittington* was performed at the Drill Hall Havant, on Wednesday afternoon, by a party from a naval camp on the south coast. It will be repeated on Saturday afternoon and evening in aid of Havant War Memorial Hospital.

**26.1.1945** – The marriage took place at Frankston, Victoria, Australia, last week, of Major Lynton S White MBE RA, younger son of Sir Dymoke White MP and Lady White of Southleigh Park, Havant, to Miss Phyllis Worley, elder daughter of Mr Justice Worley and Mrs NA Worley.

Mr Worley is now interned by the Japanese. Major White was at Hong Kong during its siege and capitulation, when he became a prisoner of war. After some months he escaped and in company with one or two fellow officers experienced a good deal of adventure and some hardships before reaching safety in a part of China held by Chinese forces. Major White was awarded the MBE in January 1943 and has recently been mentioned in despatches. [His story is told in *Escape Through China* by David Bosanquet, who escaped with Major White.]



Lynton White on board RMS *Viceroy of India* in 1940 on his way out east. He is flanked by his future wife and by Douglas Clague, the leader of the group of four which escaped from Hong Kong in 1942. (*Photograph courtesy of Lynton's son, Robert White.*)

**9.2.1945** – Members of Havant and District WVS collected about 1,100 household articles for the bombed people of Deptford and about £30 was spent on new things. Two 2-ton lorries, supplied by the ARP, were needed to deliver the goods to Deptford.

**9.2.1945** – Trooper Raymond Sisley wrote home to his parents about German brutality when they occupied Holland. *We were invited to tea by a woman whose husband was in a British hospital, having been recaptured by the Jerries during our advance. We had rescued him in the nick of time, as he had been tortured to make him talk. Before we left an ambulance brought him home. He was a pitiful sight, finger nails burnt but healing nicely. I gave him most of my cigarettes from a packet you gave me.*

Sisley was a military driver during WW2. According to his grandson his vehicle hit a land mine in Belson, France, in April 1945 and he received injuries which required plastic surgery. He was sent to a Manchester hospital, known for its pioneering treatment in this type of surgery, and there he met his future wife whom he brought to live in Havant. (See BBC WW2 People's War 2003.) On 4th May Trooper Raymond Sisley writes: *The*

*front wheels of our tank missed a mine but the back one caught it. We overturned and exploded, catching fire. My hatch was jammed tight but I caught sight of the escape hatch. I pulled it open and up rushed the fire. My glasses saved my eyes as they were burnt black. The plane in which we were being taken to hospital crashed into a ditch. We all got out without a scratch. That all happened on Friday the 13th!* Trooper Sisley reveals that he is making good progress and is on penicillin.

**16.3.1945** – Portsmouth Special Re-planning Committee recommended that 27.6 acres of land at Leigh Park should be leased to Havant and Waterloo UDC for their post-war housing and that no temporary buildings should be constructed. The Council concurred.

**4.4.1945** – A Havant airman, who was one of 1,000 prisoners forced to take part in a march of 500 miles across Germany, has returned home after being freed by the Americans. W/O Ronald Fermor RAFVR, of Staunton Road, Havant, [1914-1992] was for two-and-a-half years a prisoner at Stalag 344. On January 26th, 1,000 men were marched away from the camp. They were given one Red Cross parcel to last for ten days and the contents were frozen in the tins. They had no food all the way and were given only one small black loaf to seven men.

Fermor saw nine men shot for stealing mangolds from a clump by the roadside. He sold his shirt to a German woman for a small piece of bread. The men lived on mangolds, potato peelings and grass and once took corn out of a manger to eat. For three months they withstood terrible conditions of starvation and cold, their boots frozen to their feet, sleeping in the snow with no covering but their coats. Hundreds dropped down, unable to continue. By mid-March 40 of the remaining 180, including Fermor, were too ill and weak to walk further. They were left at a Stalag with French prisoners and for nearly three weeks they lay on wooden forms, too weak to move. When the Americans arrived on March 30th to tell them they were free, some of them cried like children. As soon as they were strong enough they were flown home. WO Fermor reached home on April 11th for thirty days leave before returning to hospital. [Fermor was part of the notorious Death March and part of his war diary has been put on online by his son Michael, who told me that his father's most vivid memory was passing some 500 Jewish girls being brought from Budapest.]

**11.5.1945** – VE Day was celebrated in a rather subdued manner. However, in the evening bonfires were lit and effigies of Hitler and his gang were thrown into the flames. A party of liberated POWs was treated to a victory supper in

the Commercial Hotel, North Street, Havant, as guests of the Labour Party. Other activities included a parade of Civil Defence workers and an open air service at the recreation ground. There was also a programme of sports for the children, the prizes being presented by Mrs Dewhurst.

**18.5.1945** – A street party was enjoyed by the children of Staunton Road, Western Road and Crossway on Saturday. Ninety-four children sat down to an excellent tea with a large cake inscribed *Victory 1945*. After tea the children had sports. A march around the square was headed by a decorated 'bull dog'. All babies were in decorated carts drawn by members of the Royal Navy. Each child received a gift of money, an orange, a bar of chocolate, sweets and mineral waters.

**26.5.1945** – Children of the Waterloo Road and Fairfield Road areas enjoyed a Victory tea party served in the playground of the Council School. After tea everyone went to Havant Park for sports and a Punch and Judy show. An effigy of Hitler on top of a huge bonfire was set alight in the Star Meadow. The event was organised by Mr William Couzens, Mr Ralph Cousins (Snr), Mr Frank Stockley and Mr Bob Roberts.

## Requisitioned Houses



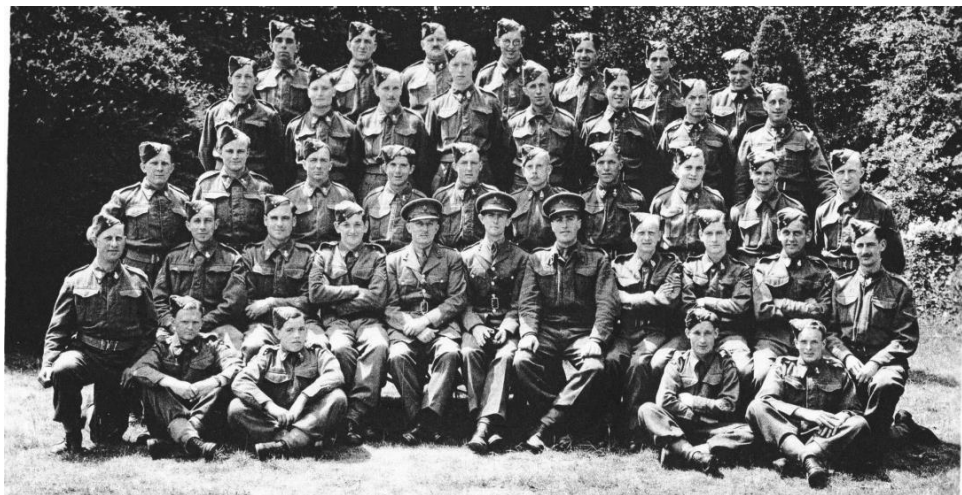
Langbrook circa 1939. *(Courtesy of the Perrin family.)*

During WW2 many of Havant's largest houses were requisitioned by the Admiralty or the War Office, including Leigh Park House, Southleigh, West Leigh, Moorlands (now part of The Spring Arts and Heritage Centre), Warblington House and Wade Court. The face of Langstone changed when Langbrook, Southbrook, Flint House and Langstone Towers were all taken over and Langbrook and Flint House were used to accommodate Wrens.

Betty Jennings, then of Emsworth, was a WRNS officers' steward based at Langbrook (demolished in 1965 to make way for housing). In her cabin there were six to eight girls sleeping in bunk beds. They were taken each day to work at Northney One Fleet Air Arm Camp at North Hayling. The late John Freeston told me that Langbrook's garage was used as a guard room by the Home Guard as a base for patrols. Mr Loat the optician was our officer and Harold Stemp, the gardener, was our corporal.

Audrey, a Havant resident, told me that Leng's, the large shop on the corner of South Street and East Street, was empty during the war and was occupied by soldiers, although to begin with there was no water laid on and the men had to be marched to the laundry on the corner of Staunton Road to carry out their ablutions. Denvilles House was also taken over by the Army.

Langstone Towers, in Langstone High Street, was used by Airspeed Ltd as a drawing office and canteen and a long building was erected in the grounds for the construction of wooden aeroplane parts for Mosquitos and Horsa Gliders.



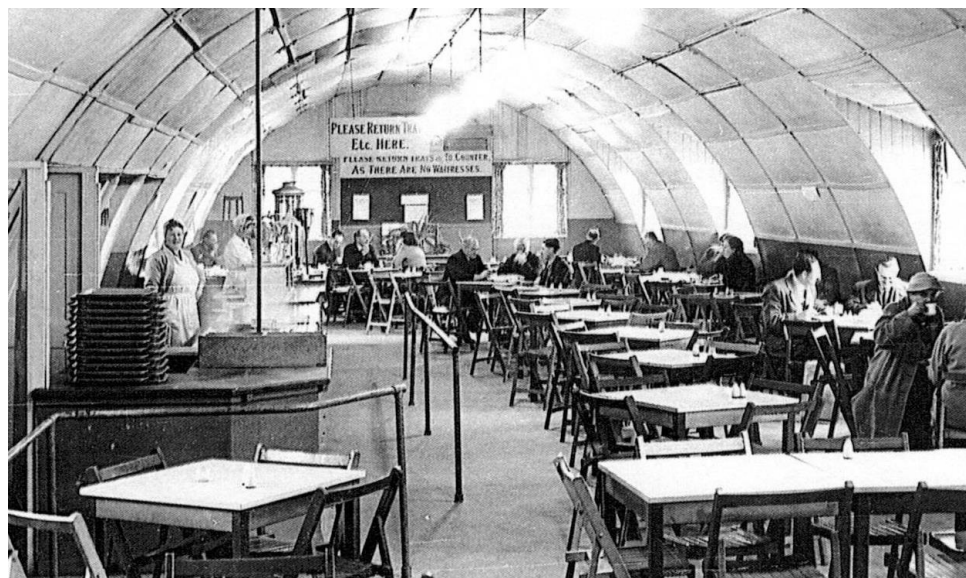
Officers and men of the Surrey and Sussex Yeomanry, including drivers and signallers, were stationed at nearby Wade Court. The grounds were also used by the Havant Scouts, who established a camp site there known as Heron Woods in September 1944, when the *Hampshire Telegraph* reported: *two acres of woodland, with streams and a lake with an island, have been made available by Major J Stephen. (Photograph West Sussex Record Office.)*



# The British Restaurant

British Restaurants started life as Communal Feeding Centres for Londoners who had been bombed out of their homes. They were renamed British Restaurants and erected by local authorities to provide cheap meals for anyone who wished to eat there, especially workers. In January 1942 the *Hampshire Telegraph* announced that land in Park Way, Havant, had been requisitioned for a British Restaurant. It had been decided that there would be self-contained smoking facilities and that the kitchen might also be used for the cooking of school meals. In February sections of the new British Restaurant arrived at the site which was opposite the entrance to the fire station.

In mid-May Lt Cdr Ralph Richardson RNVR, the famous film star, opened the restaurant which had cost £3,330 to build. He congratulated all concerned in the establishing of such an attractive restaurant and wished it every success. Among those who ate there on the day were Lady White, Captain AE Jones MC, Mr Frances who was the Deputy Meat Agent for the Southern Area, Mr AE Madgwick, Clerk to the Council, and other civil officials. CG Tanner was chairman of the restaurant committee.



The British Restaurant in 1958. Note the sign which says: *Please return trays to the counter as there are no waitresses.*

In the first fortnight, excluding Sundays, 2,883 main meals, 2,870 puddings, 295 soups, 4,110 teas and 1,490 sundry foods were served and there were requests to keep the restaurant open after 4.30 p.m.

In October 1942 when the Havant and Waterloo Urban District Council was discussing whether or not Hayling needed a British Restaurant, Mr King said that they catered for a few selfish people who wanted to avoid rationing. Mr Flanders retorted that he had just lunched at the Havant restaurant and had counted forty-three girls and young women, who were working at local factories and living away from home doing important work. As they wanted to get away from the *National Loaf and Spam*, they were having a decent and well-deserved meal. He also saw six men in overalls having a well-earned lunch and ascertained that they were engaged on constructing water tanks for the National Fire Service.

By November 1943 the restaurant was closing at 5 p.m. instead of 7.30 p.m. due to blackout requirements. Also, the restaurant committee was considering a request to allow Sunday opening. In July 1944 it was agreed that meetings could be held in the restaurant and screens were provided to seal off the kitchen etc. at a cost of £26. On 5th January 1945 the restaurant staff provided a special New Year tea for one hundred and thirty children and a naval party from Idsworth Convalescent Home. The staff also gave a Yuletide Social to their relatives and friends. After supper there was an entertainment with the manageress, Miss Stott, being dressed in *Nellie Wallace style*. At about this time Miss Stott was awarded an increase in salary from £4 10s. (£4.50) to £5 per week.

The Civic Restaurant Act 1947 empowered local authorities to establish and carry on restaurants, and otherwise provide for the supply of meals and refreshments to the public. The Havant Civic Restaurant continued to prepare school meals for a wide area, until April 1957, by which time new schools had been built with their own kitchens. The restaurant could no longer make ends meet and closed on 20th February 1959, when the building and its contents were sold for a reported £3,640. The dedicated staff members, Miss Jago, Miss Britten, Mrs Kennett and Mrs Reeder, were all given gratuities of between £5 and £50.

## HMS *Oribi*

HMS *Oribi* was originally to be named HMS *Observer* but when the South African Government sponsored the build her name was changed to that of a small South African antelope. She was launched on 14th January 1941.

In 1942 Havant and Waterloo area Savings Committee fixed their 'Warship Week' for 7–14th March, when they hoped to raise £210,000, the cost of the hull of a destroyer. In July 1942 the *Hampshire Telegraph* reported that although the total investment of £189,248 15s 6d fell short of the target by £20,000, the Havant area had been granted permission to adopt the destroyer HMS *Oribi*. The local paper later reported that the Admiralty had given instructions for a replica of the ship's badge [an Oribi on a blue field] to be made for presentation to the Havant district. \*In return the Havant area would present a commemorative plaque to the ship, the cost of which would be met by the local savings committee. At about this time Mr Boscott of Havant and Waterloo Urban District Council donated his souvenir pair of Oribi antlers to the local savings committee.



In March 1942, after a successful 'Warship Week' National Savings campaign, HMS *Oribi* was adopted by the civil community of Havant.

At the time of the adoption *Oribi* was under refit and her captain was Lt Cdr John Edwin Home McBeath. McBeath was born in Natal in 1907 and commanded the ship between May 1941 and February 1943. He had a distinguished career, retiring as Rear-Admiral John McBeath RN CB DSO DSC and dying in 2000 aged 80.

The most eventful time came for *Oribi* under the next captain, John Anthony Charles Ingram, who was also born in South Africa and entered Dartmouth aged thirteen. In September 1943 it was reported that since being commissioned two years earlier, HMS *Oribi* had steamed 88,000 miles and escorted many convoys in the Atlantic and to Malta. Once she had sighted five U-boats boats in three days and had rammed one of them. Lieutenant JW Murphy RNVR was reported

as saying: *We hit her with a metallic clang and she sank like a stone. The watch below thought we had been torpedoed. The other U-boat dived and we had to hunt her, so we couldn't wait to see if there were survivors from the one we rammed.*



*Photograph of Lt Cdr JAC Ingram  
courtesy of his family.*

The action took place east of Newfoundland. It appears that U-boat 125 was disabled by *Oribi*, was unable to dive, and was sunk on 6th May with gunfire from the British corvette, HMS *Snowflake*. There were no survivors.

*Oribi's* part in the action, known as *Convoy ONS-5* and regarded as the turning point of the Battle of the Atlantic, resulted in Ingram being awarded the DSC in June 1943, *for great skill and daring in action with enemy submarines in the Atlantic*. In September 1943 Ingram was awarded a bar to his DSC, *for bravery and outstanding skill in an action in the North Atlantic in which an enemy submarine was rammed and destroyed*. Ingram was promoted to Commander in 1945, retired in 1960, and died in Rondebosch, South Africa, in 1992. He was eighty-one.

Between September 1944 and April 1945 HMS *Oribi* was commanded by Lt Disney Mainwaring Vaughan-Hughes, followed by Lt Cdr Robert Sydney Hopper DSC, who was in command from April 1945 until the end of the war. After being paid off in 1946 HMS *Oribi* was acquired by the Turkish Navy, renamed *Gayret*, and scrapped in 1965.

\*The oak plaque presented by Havant to the ship was made by the artist Percy John Delf Smith of Hampstead, who wrote to Mr Madgwick of the UDC, *Your town makes excellent parchment and I have used a great deal of it to write manuscripts*. Audrey, who was a twenty-year-old secretary when war broke out and worked for the Council during the war, told me in 2013 that she helped pack the many books and knitted items that were donated by the people of Havant for the men of HMS *Oribi*. She was also asked to play the piano at the exchange of the plaque and badge ceremony. She dashed along to Chapman's in East Street, where they managed to find a copy of *God Save The King*, and got back just in time to play it.

# Two Medical Heroes – Doctor Michael S Dewhurst and Mary Mattie Stewart

*Abridged from biographical notes kindly sent to me by Dr John K Dewhurst in 2012.*



Michael S Dewhurst and his daughter  
Norah



Mary Mattie Dewhurst

Michael Dewhurst was born in 1898 in Chipping Campden, where his father was a General Practitioner. On reaching military age in 1916 Michael was drafted into the army and commissioned into the King's Royal Rifle Corps. As a platoon commander he sustained a disabling shrapnel wound in the knee and was invalided home. On being declared fit he was drafted to the Italian front. On discharge he went up to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, to read for pre-clinical medicine and then to University College Hospital for the clinical years. He was a considerable athlete and sportsman.

Mary Kesteven, Michael's future wife, was born in London. Her father, Thomas Lawrence Kesteven, was reduced to poverty at the age of sixteen when his father died suddenly leaving him with responsibility for his mother and three siblings. His cousin took him on as junior clerk in the solicitors' firm Lawrence Graham, in Lincoln's Inn. Thomas later rose to be senior partner and a wealthy man. Mary always desired hard work. She shocked her family and the head gardener by insisting on having her own garden and doing all the heavy work with her own hands. In her late teens she wanted to go to art school and her father only agreed to this on condition that she never sold a painting, which he saw as 'taking the bread out of the mouths of poor men's families'.

Michael and Mary were married in 1928 at about the time that Michael

answered an advertisement for a partner by Dr Burford Norman of Havant. Burford 's father, Stewart Norman, had recently retired and still lived in the upstairs of West Street House, where the surgery occupied the ground floor. Burford was some years older than Michael and had qualified in time to serve as a doctor in the Royal Army Medical Corps where he had won a Military Cross. They got on well and remained friends throughout their partnership of twenty years. In 1929 the Havant War Memorial Hospital opened. Burford was a keen surgeon and Michael an anaesthetist and between them they ran a good surgical service. They both kept up with the latest developments and they provided a full obstetric service, even to doing caesarean sections.

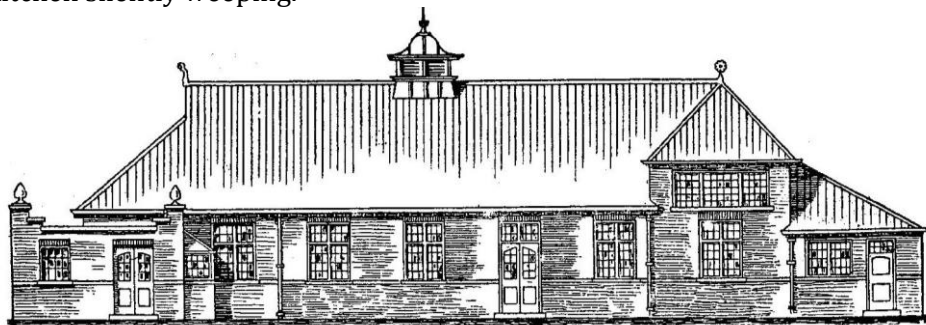
In the 1930s the social structure was important and rigid. Leigh Park was the domain of Lady Fitzwygram, who would have seemed rather remote to most of the local population. [However, the war took its toll on the family, as can be seen from the Havant Roll of Honour.] When the Dewhursts were newly married Lady Fitzwygram invited them to dinner. The invitation was delivered by the footman in the coach and four, which indicated precisely where they stood in the social scale. Mary was requested to wear her wedding dress. They were invited as a gesture to indicate that as the new doctor and his wife they were to be recognised but in no way admitted to intimacy. The doctor might be called on to attend one of the servants but if one of the family fell ill a top London consultant would be summoned.

The Normans' was an old and established practice and covered a very wide area. Despite his heavy workload Michael found time to run a boxing club for the boys of Havant one night a week. The local population was increasing and in the late thirties the partners took on Dr Gray to manage Hayling. Mary, meanwhile, was in the Mother's Union delivering Parish magazines and sitting on the War Memorial Hospital Committee. At home she was mixing concrete and laying York paving paths. The young gardener was not allowed to interfere.

There were now two doctors in Emsworth; Drs Rickett and Corbin, but everything was thrown into disarray by the outbreak of war. Drs Gray, Rickett and Corbett were all called up, which left Michael and Burford doing five men's work and soon additional tasks were added. Michael was already Admiralty Surgeon Agent and with the rapid increase of the navy and some unenthusiastic men, the evenings were often interrupted by sailors pleading sickness preventing them returning from leave. Also, despite not being a trained pathologist Michael was required to undertake post mortem examinations of the corpses washed up on Hayling beach, a more frequent

occurrence as the war went on.

Already in 1939 arrangements were being made in preparation for the expected air raids. Gas masks were issued, sirens were installed to warn of enemy attack and Air Raid Precautions instituted, with wardens appointed to enforce the regulations. Burford and Michael were appointed to Havant Hospital and a First Aid Post for minor injuries was established at St Faith's Church Hall. After a few months training at the Hospital under the care of Matron Whitmell, Mary was appointed Commandant [of the local Voluntary Aid Detachment] as a VAD. This considerable task involved organising training of the staff, rotas for cooking and cleaning, the purchase of provisions as laid down in the budget and general management and housekeeping; as, for instance, persuading the town council that there really was an infestation of fleas. (Finally resolved only when Mary released a matchbox full of fleas on the pest control officer's desk). There was also a pastoral element involved; the staff were almost all married women whose husbands were serving in the forces. Michael Dewhurst's son recollects one whose husband was lost in HMS *Hood*. She was standing at the sink in the kitchen silently weeping.



St Faith's Church Hall – Red Cross First Aid Post.

Both Mary and Michael had to attend their place of duty whenever there was an air raid alert. This might be six or more nights a week and often lasted all night. The combination of sleep deprivation and unrelenting work left them in a state of chronic exhaustion. There was comparatively little direct bomb damage in Havant, although several people were killed. The First Aid Post was only intended for minor injuries and mustard gas decontamination but on one night there was a heavy raid on Portsmouth that included an attack on a naval gun emplacement just across the mouth of Langstone Harbour at Sinah Common. The hospitals in Portsmouth and Cosham were soon full and casualties were evacuated across the bridge to Havant where the hospital

was soon overwhelmed. Major casualties started to arrive at the First Aid Post. Mary called in Nurse Blackman, the District Nurse, but clearly an expert surgeon was needed. In desperation Mary telephoned her father-in-law, Dr John Dewhurst, who was now living in Bedhampton. He had in his youth trained as a surgeon and in those days a country doctor was expected to undertake surgery. He walked down through the continuing raid and operated all night with Nurse Blackman administering open ether anaesthesia and Mary acting as theatre sister. In the morning, clearing up, Mary was confronted by a badly mangled sailor's leg which had been amputated during the night. She bundled it up in newspaper, took it home in her bicycle basket and buried it in the garden. [Presumably it is still there.]

Air Raid warnings became less frequent as the war went on but there were still alerts caused by lone raiders who came in over the sea below the radar and machine-gunned anyone or anything they saw. One day Mary was cycling home up Wade Court when a Messerschmitt machine-gunned her. She jumped off her bike and got into the ditch and arrived home unharmed but found a bullet hole through the fold of her coat. Michael was almost constantly on call for the practice; even days off and weekends were not sacrosanct. He was particularly indebted to Matron Whitmell at the hospital who possessed what is called 'clinical acumen' and always knew if a patient was seriously ill. Then there was Nurse Anderson, the District Midwife, who was unusual in riding a motor scooter. She only called for the doctor when necessary.

The end of the war brought no immediate relief. Dr Burford Norman had a heart attack and took immediate retirement. Michael was troubled by arthritis of the hip and Mary, a migraine sufferer, had developed trigeminal neuralgia, which was only relieved through the use of powerful painkillers. The First Aid Post was closed and returned to its original use as the Parish Hall. The population of Havant was increasing and the return of the Emsworth doctors, comparatively rested, was welcome but Michael still had to find partners. He engaged Alec Brennan who later took on Hayling and then Gary O'Flynn. The development of Leigh Park, which had been occupied by the Royal Navy during the war, soon began and Michael and the partners opened a branch surgery in Riders Lane at Stockheath. Leigh Park grew rapidly and the rest of Havant grew also in the mid-fifties. However, when Michael retired both he and Mary continued their service to the community and ran a centre for the elderly in South Street, which also involved giving tea parties in the garden at Shawfield, Wade Court, their home for the past forty years. Both were suffering from increasing debility and reluctantly decided



to move to the Isle of Wight where their daughter, Norah, and her husband had a small farm They stayed on the island until their deaths in the late 1970s. [There is a Dewhurst Memorial Garden behind St Faith's Church.]

## Havant War Memorial Cross

### WW2 Roll of Honour

The WW2 Roll of Honour includes a number of Bedhampton men, as Bedhampton ceased to be a civil parish when the Havant and Waterloo Urban District was formed under the County of Southampton Review Order of 1932. The main sources used are the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website, ancestry.co.uk, local and national newspapers, naval-history.net and U-boat.net. I am grateful to relatives of the fallen who have kindly allowed the inclusion of personal photographs and other valuable information. We should not forget those who came home injured and mentally scarred and the many local bereaved parents, wives and children.

**LAWRENCE SIDNEY JOHN ADKIN** – Sergeant Navigator 1600694, 514 Squadron RAF Volunteer Reserve.

Died 30th January 1944, aged 21.

RUNNYMEDE AIR FORCES MEMORIAL, Surrey. This memorial commemorates over 20,000 named airmen who were lost in WW2 during operations from bases in the United Kingdom and North and Western Europe, and who have no known graves.

Born Epsom. Son of Sidney Lawrence Victor and Jessie Violet Adkin, née Lawrence, of 33 Fourth Avenue, Denville, Havant. Sidney LV Adkin served in France with the Royal West Kent Regiment during WW1.

**ARTHUR GEORGE ALLEN** – Chief Engine Room Artificer P/MX 55882, HMS *Peterel*.

Died 8th December 1941, aged 48.

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL, Southsea Common.

Born Landport. The 1901 census has him as son of Arthur, a wardroom steward RN, and Charlotte Eliza Louise Allen [née White]. By 1911 Arthur the younger was a boy artificer, aged eighteen. He married Dorothy Elizabeth Hall at Havant in 1923. The 1911 census has her as a daughter of William Hall, fishmonger, of 1 Ranscombe Villas, South Street.

The river gunboat HMS *Peterel* was sunk on 8th December 1941 at Shanghai by the Japanese cruiser *Izumo*, after she refused to surrender. Six members of the skeleton crew were killed and several wounded. Some men were saved by brave Chinese fisherman whilst under Japanese fire. Two men were captured ashore and one escaped capture. *Hampshire Telegraph* 19.12.1941 – *CERA Allen had been abroad for four years in the Peterel and was expecting leave when it was cancelled just prior to the outbreak of hostilities in the Far East. A week before Peterel was lost Mrs Allen and her daughter Pat broadcast greetings to him through the BBC and they were hoping to receive messages from him. While Mrs Allen was being interviewed by our Havant representative, a telegram arrived from the Admiralty stating that her husband was missing but possibly was a prisoner of war. CERA Allen served in the last war in the Battle of Zeebrugge. He had served 21 years in the Navy and after retiring on a pension joined the staff of the Portsmouth Electricity Department.*

**MAURICE CECIL ASHER** – Leading Writer P/MX 53540, HMS *Jersey*.  
Died 7th December 1939, aged 23.

#### PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

Born Portsmouth. Son of Francis Cecil and Elizabeth Asher, née Hawkins, of Bedhampton. The 1911 census has Francis, aged 28, as 'Sergeant, Army Pay Corps'. On the above date HMS *Jersey* was hit by a torpedo, fired from the German destroyer SMS *Erich Giese*, when on her way back from laying a minefield off Cromer. This caused a large fire and repairs took ten months.

**JOHN WILLIAM ASHLEY** – Ordinary Seaman P/JX 161926, HMS *Barham*.  
Died 25th November 1941, aged 18.

#### PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

John Ashley was killed when the battleship HMS *Barham* was blown up 200 miles from Alexandria by U-331, with the loss of 859 officers and men. Film of the explosion can be seen on the British Pathé website.

'Jackie' Ashley was the third of eight children and the eldest son of William and Edith May Ashley. HT 19.12.1941 – *Official information has been received that Jack Ashley, son of Mr and Mrs Ashley of 4 Leigh Terrace, Havant, is missing, presumably killed, from one of HM ships which has been damaged by enemy action 'It was his first commission but he loved the Navy', said his mother.*

**HARRY RICHARD BEACH** – Leading Seaman JX 134081, HM Submarine *Thames*.

Died 3rd August 1940.

#### PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

On the 22nd July the *Thames* succeeded in attacking the German torpedo boat *Luchs*, west of the Skagerrak. *Luchs* was shielding the *Gneisenau*, which must have been the intended target. The submarine was reported overdue on 3 August 1940 and had probably struck a mine off Norway. As HMS *Thames* was operating from Dundee with the 2nd Submarine Flotilla when she was lost, her crew members are all commemorated in Dundee. There was a crew of sixty-three on board. (See Leonard Harris below).



**JOHN PHILIP BLAKE MC** – Captain 43 (RM) Commando.

Died 3rd June 1944, aged 26.

BELGRADE WAR CEMETERY, Yugoslavia.

*Photograph of John Blake kindly supplied by his brother David.*

Born Portsmouth. Son of Philip, dental surgeon, and Marjorie Flora Blake, who moved in about 1918 to Wade Cottage, Wade Court Road, Havant.

John Blake played cricket for Hampshire and for Cambridge University. 43 Commando took part in the attack on German fortified positions on the Island of Brac, Yugoslavia, 2-4 June 1944. See lectern in St Faith's Church: *In Memoriam John Philip Blake MC, BA Cantab. Acting Captain Royal Marines. Killed in Action while serving with the 43rd Commandos 2nd June 1944.* (The date on the CWGC website is 3rd June.) There is an account of his war service on the St Faith's website.

**WILLIAM DAVID GORDON BOND** – Sergeant Pilot 903298, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

Died 24th February 1941, aged 19.

CAVERSFIELD (ST LAURENCE) CHURCHYARD, Oxfordshire.

Born Portsmouth. Son of William Charles and Ivy Lillah Bond, née Cutland, of Bedhampton.

The churchyard includes 25 Commonwealth war graves connected with RAF Bicester, dating from before and during WW2. This was a training station for Bomber Command. Bond was 'killed on active service'.

**RONALD THOMAS BRADSHAW** – Flight Lieutenant (Flying Instructor) 44308, 216 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died 4th November 1942 in a flying accident, aged 34.

HELIOPOLIS WAR CEMETERY, Egypt.

Born Portsmouth. 1911 census: son of Richard, Chief Stoker RN, and Alice Anne Bradshaw. Husband of Violet Ellen Margaret Bradshaw of Sturry, Kent. At the time of his death Ronald was living at 56 Park Lane, Bedhampton, with his wife.

Apparently a 216 sqdn Hudson stalled and crashed on take-off at Khanka Airfield on the above date and all on board lost their lives, including Ronald Bradshaw.

**STANLEY RONALD BRAILEY** – Private 5498364, 2nd Bn Hampshire Regiment.

Died 10th July 1947, aged 27.

PORTSMOUTH (KINGSTON) CEMETERY Grave Ref. Plot 105 (Kimber), Row 8. Grave 39.

Born Portsmouth. In 1905 Stanley's father, Frank Thomas Samuel Brailey, married Daisy Hodder at Portsmouth. The 1911 census for Portsmouth has Frank as a tramway conductor. Stanley was born in 1920 and his mother died when he was about seven. In 1947 Stanley's father was living in Bedhampton, apparently having remarried.

**JOHN A CAREY** – 2nd Lieutenant 73053, First Medium Regiment, Royal Artillery.

Died 23rd May 1940, aged 22.

BEDHAMPTON (ST THOMAS) CHURCHYARD, north of the chancel. Also commemorated on the St Brelade, Jersey, memorial.

HT 31.5.1940 - *Draped in a Union Jack, on which rested the deceased officer's sword and cap, the coffin containing the body of Lt John Anthony Carey RA, who died from wounds received at sea, rested before the altar at St Joseph's Church, Havant, on Monday night, prior to the requiem mass on Tuesday morning.*

Son of Lt.-Col. John Lionel Romilly Carey, DSO, formerly Royal Artillery and of Mary Gertrude Carey (née Dobson), of St Brelades, Jersey, Channel Islands; husband of Dorothy Margaret Carey, née Shaw, of Bedhampton.

**DEREK JOHN CHASE** – Pilot officer (Navigator) 175174, 156 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died 23rd April 1944, aged 31.

#### REICHSWALD FOREST WAR CEMETERY

Son of Henry John, chemist and druggist, and Agnes Elizabeth Chase, née Griffiths; husband of Jean Chase of Havant. Member of the Pharmaceutical Society. The will index shows Derek's address as Bury Road, Alverstoke, and that he left over £13,000.

Chase was in the crew of a Lancaster Mk 111 on a mission to Dusseldorf when the plane was hit by flak while flying at 19,000 feet. It crashed in the target area killing all seven men. See 156 squadron website.

**CHARLES HENRY COOK** – Ordinary Seaman LT/180339, Royal Naval Patrol Service, HM Trawler *Thuringia*.

Died 28th May 1940, aged 28. Charles died in HM Trawler *Thuringia* which was sunk by a mine while patrolling in the North Sea.

#### LOWESTOFT NAVAL MEMORIAL

*Hampshire Telegraph* 31. 5. 1940: *Ordinary Seaman Charles Henry Cook of Brockhampton Lane, Havant, is missing, believed killed, on active service. A few hours before the official telegram arrived his wife received a letter saying that he hoped soon to be home with his wife and the three children.* The third child was born on 23rd June 1940 and was named Charles Henry Cook, after his late father. Charles Cook junior still lives in Havant and told me that his father was an Emsworth fisherman before the war.

**ALBERT CLARENCE DAUGHTREY** – Able Seaman P/J111527, HMS *Royal Oak*.

Died 14th October 1939, aged 31.

#### PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

HMS *Royal Oak* was at anchor about a mile offshore at Scapa Flow and was sunk during the night by torpedoes from U-47. 120 of those who drowned were between 14 and 18 years of age, a huge loss of boy sailors. Son of Henry Albert and Annie Florence Daughtrey, husband of Kathleen Jessie Daughtrey

of Havant. The *Hampshire Telegraph* report on the incident states that Daughtrey, of New Road, Bedhampton, leaves a young widow [Kathleen, née Grant]. They were married last Boxing Day.

Six Havant families were bereaved as a result of this incident (See Dowding and Offer below.) The other local men who died and are commemorated on Portsmouth Naval Memorial were CPO Frank Rann (34) of Langstone; PO Arthur Ernest Burden (30), husband of Emily Burden of Bedhampton, who had three children, and Supply Assistant Hubert John Cousins (20), son of Walter and Rose Cousins of Havant.

**PERCY WILLIAM GEORGE DOWDING** – Ordinary Seaman P/SSX 26092, HMS *Royal Oak*.

Died 14th October 1939, aged 19.

#### PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

Percy was born in Fordingbridge in 1920. He was the son of Lily Dowding.

**DENNIS FORD** – Flying Officer Pilot 37631, 204 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died 15th October 1939, aged 27.

HOOE (ST JOHN) CHURCHYARD EXTENSION, Devon. There are twelve Commonwealth burials of the 1914-18 war here. There are a further thirteen of the 1939-45 war, four being unidentified seamen of the Merchant Navy.

Son of Charles Walter and Frances Ford, of Harbour View, Glebe-Park Avenue, Bedhampton. Died at Plymouth Sound. Probate to Charles Walter Ford, retired engineer Lt Cdr RN.

**GEORGE EDWIN ALFRED FREELAND** – Lieutenant (E) RN, HMS *Neptune*.

Died 19th December 1941, aged 37.

#### PLYMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

At 01.06 on the morning of the 19th December HMS *Neptune* ran into an uncharted minefield off Tripoli and struck the first of four mines; she sank before dawn at 04.04 with the loss of 764 officers and men. Just one man was rescued by an Italian torpedo boat, after five days in the water, and was taken prisoner.

Born Hove. Son of Edwin Albion Henry, electrician, and Elizabeth Charlotte Freeland; husband of Lily Elizabeth Freeland of Bedhampton.



**REGINALD ARTHUR EDWARD GAMBLER –**  
Stoker First Class P/KX 76085 HMS *Esk*

Died 1st September 1940, aged 34.

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

Born in South Harting in 1906. Son of Henry Edward (died 1936) and Louisa Gamblen (died 1912) and maternal uncle of **Norman Peter Wiggins** (below). Reginald was known as Frank to the family. The 1911 census shows the Gamblens living at 3 Western Road, Havant, with Reginald's father as a builder's carter. Reginald served for many years in the Royal Navy before the war and rejoined to serve in WW2. He married Kathleen Esther Gower in 1937, at Battle, Sussex. She died in 2000.

On the night of 31 August 1940, the sea to the northwest of Texel, an island in the Netherlands, was the scene of the sinking of two British destroyers by German mines in what became known as the 'Texel Disaster'. HMS *Express* struck a mine and was badly damaged, HMS *Esk* went to her assistance and hit a mine and sank immediately, HMS *Ivanhoe* also went to help and hit a mine. She was badly damaged and had to be sunk by HMS *Kelvin*.

Myrtle Lipscombe, née Wiggins, was Reginald's niece and still living in 2014. She kindly supplied the photo of Reginald 'Frank' Gamblen. See notes on Norman Wiggins below and John Robinson, who was serving in HMS *Express*.

**THOMAS IAN GAY** – Lieutenant (E) RN - HMS *Ark Royal*.

Died 1st August 1941, aged 23.

On 1 August 1941, after 810 Squadron had delivered an attack on Alghero airfield, a returning Swordfish crashed while landing on HMS *Ark Royal*, detonating a 40 pound bomb that had hung up in its rack. Thomas Gay was one of five fatalities.

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

Son of the late Commander George Murch Gay RN, and of Olive Trounsell Gay, née Allen, of Stockheath, Havant. Thomas Gay's father served in Africa throughout WW1 and died in 1933 when Thomas was fifteen.

**REX GEORGE** – Marine PO/X113288, No. 45 Royal Marine Commando.

Died 20th August 1944, aged 20. Mentioned in Despatches.

RANVILLE WAR CEMETERY Calvados, France.

Son of Arthur Percy and Clara George, née Legg, of Bedhampton. See Bedhampton War Memorial.

**HERBERT WILLIAM JOHN GILLARD** – Driver T/10680680, Royal Army Service Corps.

Died 30th April 1945, aged 20.

HAMBURG CEMETERY

Born Hampshire. Son of William and Lucy Emily Gillard, of Havant; grandson of Lucy Longman, née Parvin, of Havant.

**WILLIAM TERRY WINTER GUY** – Able Seaman P/J 98055, HMS *Acasta*.

Died 8th June 1940, aged 36.

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

HMS *Acasta* was sunk by German battlecruisers on 8th June 1940, while escorting the aircraft carrier HMS *Glorious* from Norway to England. There was only one survivor.

Son of William Henry and Martha Guy. Married Nellie Charlotte Lettice Scutt at Havant in 1931. A son, Reginald, was born in Havant in 1933, On 7th November 1941 The *Hampshire Telegraph* reported that a few months earlier Guy had been reported missing, believed to be a POW. The day after receiving that official message his mother received a letter saying that he was due home on leave. *During the past week Mrs Guy was officially informed that he is now presumed killed on active service. Mrs Guy lives at 66 Crossway, Havant.*



**LEONARD GEORGE ROWLAND HARRIS** – Able Seaman P/JX 136307, HM Submarine *Thames*.

Died 3rd August 1940, aged 24.

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

*Photograph courtesy of his cousin, Ralph Cousins.*



Born Havant. Son of Joseph Leonard and Ethel Maud Harris, née Outen. Leonard married Elsie May West in 1937. The CWGC has the widowed Elsie living at Westbourne, Bournemouth, Hants.

There are two men listed on Havant War Memorial who lost their lives in this incident; see notes on **Harry Beach** above.



**ROBERT HART** – Lieutenant 269106, Hampshire Regiment, formerly of the Royal Artillery.

Died 15th September 1944, aged 26.

CORIANO RIDGE WAR CEMETERY, Italy.

*Photograph of Robert Hart courtesy of Roger Hart.*

Coriano Ridge was the final important ridge hindering the Allied advance in the Adriatic sector in the autumn of 1944. Its capture was the key to Rimini and eventually to the River Po. German parachute and Panzer troops, aided by bad weather, resisted all attacks on their positions between 4th and 12th September 1944. (See CWGC).

Born Southsea in December 1916. Before the war Robert was attached to the Havant Company, Hants Territorials. His parents, Lionel Robert and Kate Hart, were living at 25 West Street, Havant. On 17 April 1941, Hart, by then a Bombardier, was on duty at the Sinah gun site on Hayling Island when it was attacked, with the predictor and three out of the four guns being put out of action. Six men were killed and several others were wounded. Hart's calm leadership singled him out for promotion.

In 1942 Hart married May Bessie Booker. Robert's son, Roger, lives in New Zealand. He says, '*My father was in the Royal Artillery during the first part of the war, but did not think he was doing enough after the blitz was over, so he joined the Hampshires and was killed shortly afterwards near San Marino in Italy.*'

**HARRY FRANK HUGGETT** – Private 5184808, Essex Regiment.

Died 17th March 1944, aged 22.

CASSINO WAR CEMETERY, Italy.

Harry died six days after the Allies invaded the Italian mainland; at the same time an armistice was made with the Italians who then re-entered the war on

the Allied side.

Born Dorking, Surrey. Son of Harry and Florence Lizzie Huggett, née Martin, of Bedhampton. According to the UK Army Roll of Honour Harry Frank Huggett enlisted in the Gloucestershire Regiment but was in the Essex Regiment (Infantry) when he died.



**KENNETH WALTER IERSTON –**

Ordinary Seaman P/JX 156903, HMS *Hood*.

Died 24th May 1941, aged 19.

**PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL**

*Photograph courtesy of the HMS Hood Association; contributed by Kenneth Ierston's nephew, Christopher Barrett.*

Born Fareham, where his father was a butcher. Kenneth was the eldest of four children, born between 1922 and 1935. By 1941 his parents, Thomas and Naomi Ierston, were living at Bedhampton. (The family confirms that the name Ierston is incorrectly spelt as Ireston on the Havant Memorial Cross.)

Ierston went down with HMS *Hood*. The ship was in the Denmark Strait when she was hit first by a shell from the *Prinz Eugen*, which ignited ammunition stored on her deck and then by the *Bismarck*, which hit her magazine amidships causing a huge explosion and breaking the *Hood* in two. She sank almost instantly and only three men were rescued out of a total complement of over 1,418.

**WILLIAM ERNEST IRWIN** – Electrical Artificer 4th Class P/MX 53497, HMS *Janus*.

Died 23rd January 1944, aged 22.

**PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL**

Son of William Vincent and Susan Lily Irwin, née Folland; husband of Mary Irwin, née Webster, of Bedhampton. HMS *Janus* sank when she was hit by an aerial torpedo during an air attack by the Luftwaffe off Anzio, in Italy. 158 officers and men lost their lives and 94 survivors were rescued by two other ships.

**CLAUDE ALBERT JONES** – Gunner 1483253, Royal Artillery, HQ 35 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment.

Died 5th March 1943, aged 33.

SINGAPORE MEMORIAL, in Kranji War Cemetery.

Born Havant. 1911 census for 14 Market Lane: George Albert Jones, baker, and his wife Mary Elizabeth; their four children – Frank (10), Allan George (4), Claude Albert (6 months) and his twin sister, Winifred Jessie.

Best evidence is that in October 1942, 600 men, including 126 officers and men of the above regiment, were shipped from Changi Jail in Singapore to Rabaul, the Japanese South Pacific HQ. 517 men were fit enough to be taken on to Ballale, a tiny malaria-infested island where the prisoners were put to work in the searing heat, crushing coral rock for a runway. Some died en route and others died of sickness or were killed in Allied bombing raids, when the Japanese refused to provide trenches or shelters. Up to one hundred men were executed in June 1943 and were witnessed being marched into the sea and bayoneted, beheaded or machine-gunned. Most were buried in a pit and after the Japanese surrender the remains of 436 men were buried at the Commonwealth grave in Papua New Guinea. When the mass graves were discovered after the war the Japanese authorities apparently claimed that the prisoners were lost at sea when their transport was torpedoed. In 2003 a group of relatives visited the area and laid a plaque and memorial crosses to those who died.

**FREDERICK L KIDD** – Pilot Officer 88029, 144 Squadron Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

Died 6th June 1941, aged 24.

SAGE WAR CEMETERY

Sage was on the line of the Allied advance across northern Germany in 1945 but most of those buried at Sage War Cemetery were airmen lost in bombing raids over northern Europe, whose graves were brought in from cemeteries in the Frisian Islands and other parts of north-west Germany.

Frederick Lawrance Kidd was born in 1917. He was the son of Albert Victor and Ada Winifred Kidd, née Mitchell, of Bidbury Mead, Bedhampton, who were married in Portsmouth in 1916. HT 19.12.1941 – *Pilot Officer Frederick Kidd is missing. He was educated at Portsmouth Grammar School and afterwards entered Lloyds Bank. He was a member of Havant Hockey Club. He joined the RAFVR at the outbreak of the war.*

**CHARLES IVOR JOHN KNIGHT** – Gunner 1467165, 80th Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery.

Died 10th December 1941, aged 23.

#### SINGAPORE MEMORIAL

Born Portsmouth. Son of Frederick William and Edith Katherine Knight of Grimsby, Lincolnshire. (See **Pearce, Stillwell and Traves**, all of the same regiment.)

The Singapore Memorial bears the names of over 24,000 casualties of the Commonwealth land and air forces who have no known grave.



**CYRIL BENNETT LEBBON** – Lance Corporal 2198731, 32 Bomb Disposal Company, Royal Engineers.

Died 10th December 1940, aged 43.

#### TEDDINGTON CEMETERY

*Photograph of Cyril Lebbon courtesy of his family.*

Born Winchester. 1911 Portsmouth census: aged 13 and the son of William, a bootmaker, and Mary Isabel Jane Lebbon. Cyril married Lilian Elizabeth Lemm in 1925, at Havant, and they had four children. Their daughter, Audrey, said in 2013 that her father had been a painter, decorator and signwriter and that he made a sign for The Wheelwright's Arms, in Havant. She explained that her father had served in WW1, from about 1916, and had worked as a stretcher bearer with the RAMC in France. In December 1940 Cyril's bomb disposal team, which was stationed at Teddington Barracks, unsuccessfully attempted to defuse a bomb which had landed in Bushy Park. Cyril, an officer, a sapper and two drivers were killed.

**JOHN EDWARD COOK MERRIFIELD** – Lance Sergeant 1435242, 215 Battery, 57 HAA Royal Artillery.

Died 11th March 1941, aged 40.

#### HAVANT AND WATERLOO (WARBLINGTON) Section 3 Grave 758.

Born Portsmouth. Son of Joseph Marmaduke Merrifield, pawnbroker, and Mary Louise Merrifield, of Bedhampton; husband of Madge M. Merrifield, née

Tier, of Emsworth. Madge's maternal grandfather and brother, both called John Bulbeck, were well-known local drapers. John Merrifield's address in the will index is Leecroft, Mayland Road, Bedhampton.

**CHARLES HENRY OFFER** – Able Seaman P/JX142039. HMS *Royal Oak*. Died 14th October 1939, aged 20.

#### PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

His parents, John Offer and Florence Lilian Diaper, were married in Havant in 1913. Charles was born in Westhampnett, Sussex, and had several siblings. Mrs Offer of North Way, Havant, said: *He was always bright and cheerful in his letters. I have lost a devoted son.*

**LESLIE PEARCE** – Gunner 1462822, 80th Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery.

Died 18th July 1943, aged 22.

KANCHANABURI WAR CEMETERY, Thailand. This is the largest of three cemeteries on the Burma-Siam railway.

Born Havant. Son of Christopher Thomas and Lilian Kate Pearce, née Day, of 31 Park Lane Bedhampton, who were married at Havant in 1914.

**DAVID CHARLES PETERS** – Gunner 5498331, 220 Battery, 85th AA Regt, Royal Artillery.

Died 27th June 1940, aged 20.

#### HAVANT CEMETERY – Grave 1773.

Born Havant. Son of Lieutenant Harold James Peters RN and Lillian Elizabeth Peters of Bedhampton.

*Hampshire Telegraph* 19.7.1940 – *David Charles Peters, aged 20, has died in a hospital somewhere in England from severe head wounds received in Belgium over a month ago. He was driving the leading lorry of a convoy when he was hit by shrapnel, which passed through his skull and into his brain. During his time in hospital his mother scarcely left his side and was with him when he died. He was one of three brothers, all under the age of 22, who have been serving in the Army. The eldest, Bombardier Harold Peters, was wounded seriously in the shoulder while with the BEF in Rouen and is now home on leave. The youngest boy Eric (17) is a sapper in the Royal Engineers.*

**HORACE WILLIAM GEORGE RENNISON** – Sergeant Navigator 926062, RAF Volunteer Reserve.

Died 12th June 1944, aged 31.

PETERSFIELD CEMETERY, Hampshire - Grave 4634.

Son of Thomas George Henry and Florence Anna Rennison; husband of Kathleen Maud Rennison of Petersfield. Horace was killed with others whilst on a night navigation exercise from West Freugh, Stranraer. Their Avro Anson Mark 1 aircraft crashed into crags around the Spout of Clint waterfall and the wreckage descended to the foot of the cliffs of Cairnsmore of Fleet. The bodies were located and recovered using sledges, in a tricky rescue operation. On the 15th June four of the bodies were sent by rail to their home towns for burial.

**JOHN ROBINSON** – Ordnance Artificer 3rd Class P/MX53843, HMS *Express*.

Died 2nd September 1940, aged 33.

BEDHAMPTON (ST THOMAS CHURCHYARD), east of Church.

Son of George and Amy Robinson; husband of Cecilia Mary, née Burfitt - married in 1938 at Portsmouth. On August 31st 1940, HMS *Express* left Immingham, Lincolnshire, with five other destroyers to lay a minefield off the coast of the Netherlands. Three of the ships struck mines off Texel, causing a considerable loss of life. The *Express* lost four officers and fifty-five ratings when her bow was blown off. John Robinson died from his wounds the day after the explosion.

**HUBERT JOHN ROGERS** – Petty Officer 236577, HMS *Iron Duke*.

Died 20th January 1940, aged 50.

HAVANT CEMETERY – Grave 524.

HMS *Iron Duke* was a World War I battleship which was used as a World War II depot ship based at Scapa Flow. Hubert died in an accident.

Havant.1901 census: Son of Thomas, fellmonger's labourer, and Louisa Rogers, of 5 School Road. Hubert married Elizabeth Ann Vince in 1916 at Havant. Elizabeth was the daughter of a 'fellmonger's wool-puller'.

Hubert's home address was 5 Western Road, Havant.

*Hampshire Telegraph* 26.1.1940 – A letter received by his wife indicates that he met with an accident and was taken aboard a hospital ship suffering from head injuries, which proved fatal. Petty Officer Rogers' wife, two sons and two daughters are left in bereavement.

**COLIN ROWLAND SHEPHERD** – Trooper 14407466, 'A' Squadron 1st Lothians and Border Horse, Royal Armoured Corps.

Died 27th February 1945, aged 20.

VENRAY WAR CEMETERY, Netherlands.

The town of Venray fell to the Germans in May 1940 and was not re-entered by Allied forces until September 1944. It was liberated by Allied troops in October 1944 and the burials in the cemetery date from then until March 1945.

Born Portsmouth. Son of Horace Rowland Shepherd and Gladys Irene Shepherd of Bedhampton.

**SIDNEY ARTHUR HENRY SMITH** – Lance Corporal 5512260, 7th Battalion Hampshire Regiment.

Died 26th September 1944, aged 29.

JONKERBOS WAR CEMETERY, The Netherlands.

The Netherlands fell to the Germans in May 1940 and was re-entered by Allied forces in September 1944.

Son of Sidney Charles Hamilton Smith and Margaret Ellen Smith; husband of Kathleen Mary Smith. *Hampshire Telegraph*, 3.11.1944 – *Official notice has been received that Lance Corporal Smith of the Hampshire Regiment, whose wife lives at 109 West Street, Havant, has died of wounds received on active service in NW Europe. He was 29.*



**ARTHUR ROBERT STAGG** – Sub-Lieutenant RNVR, His Majesty's Motor Gun Boat MGB110.

Died 29th May 1943, aged 21.

CHATHAM NAVAL MEMORIAL

*(Photograph of Arthur Stagg courtesy of Martin Stagg.)*

Born Havant Sept 1921. Son of Robert H Stagg and Winifred, née Matson.

Married Evelyn Locke on 1st March 1943 at Havant.

Stagg was killed in Motor Gun Boat 110, when it was sunk in action with surface craft in the Dunkirk area.

**HERBERT GEORGE STILLWELL** – Gunner 5496661, 80th Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery.

Died 13th December 1941, aged 26.

#### SINGAPORE MEMORIAL

Born Havant. Son of Joshua Allen Stillwell, who is on the WW1 Havant Roll of Honour, and died when Herbert was three. Herbert's mother was Fanny Louisa Stillwell, née Clarke. Husband of Dora G Stillwell of Copnor. Three children born at Gosport between 1935 and 1939.

**ERNEST HENRY 'Harry' TANNER** – Leading Stoker P/KX 84012, HMS *Fiji*.

Died 23rd May 1941, aged 35.

#### PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

Born Winchester. Son of Ernest George and Constance Frances Tanner née Bright, of Havant; husband of Gladys Lilian Tanner.

*Hampshire Telegraph*, 31.10.1941 – *Official information has been received that Acting Leader Stoker Ernest Henry Tanner, who was reported missing from HMS Fiji, is now presumed killed. The ship was off Crete when she sank due to enemy fire. He had served eight years in the Royal Navy and spent his last leave with his wife at their home, 45 West Street, Havant. He arrived home on Christmas Day and left a fortnight later to re-join his ship.*

**NORMAN TRAVES** – Gunner 1457108, 80th Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery.

Died 8th April 1945, aged 24.

#### SAI WAN WAR CEMETERY, Hong Kong.

Spelt **Travis** on the CWGC website and Sai Wan memorial. Son of John and Lily Travis of Cosham, Hants. Apparently Travis had been captured in Singapore.

**HAROLD GEORGE TURNER** – Seaman LT/JX206526, Royal Naval Patrol Service, HM Anti-Submarine Trawler *Kingston Ceylonite*.

Died 15th June 1942, aged 30.

Born Chichester 1912. Son of Samuel David and Ethel Kate Turner, née Dridge; husband of Edith Turner, of Bedhampton.



CREEDS (OAK GROVE) CEMETERY, Virgin Beach, Virginia, USA. HM Trawler *Kingston Ceylonite* was lent to the United States Navy in 1942 to escort convoys off the coast of America. She was manned by a British crew but was under USN control. On June 15th she struck a mine and sank off Chesapeake Bay. The bodies of Harold Turner and two of his colleagues were washed ashore. A memorial to the *Bedfordshire* and *Kingston Ceylonite* is at Oak Grove cemetery.

**CHARLES STANLEY GEORGE WEBBER** – Private 14640447, 2/5th Bn The Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey). Charles appears as a driver with the RASC on the Havant Memorial.

Died 13th September 1944, aged 34.

GRADARA WAR CEMETERY, Italy.

The site contains the graves of casualties from the advance from Ancona to Rimini, which broke the German's heavily defended Gothic Line, and from the heavy fighting around Rimini, which the Allies took on 21 September 1944.

Charles was born in Cosham in 1910, the son of Stanley Webber, a gardener, and his wife Sarah. *Hampshire Telegraph* 24.11.1944 – *Private Charles Webber has been killed while on active service in Italy. Before joining the war he was employed as a driver for Havant and Waterloo Council. He was 34 and leaves a widow and two children, who live at New Road, Bedhampton.*



**NORMAN PETER WIGGINS** – Private 5512833, Hampshire Regiment (Infantry).

Died 27th January 1944, aged 19.

MINTURNO WAR CEMETERY, Italy. The burials are mainly those of the heavy casualties incurred in crossing the river Garigliano in January 1944.

*Photograph and information courtesy of Myrtle Lipscombe.*

Norman was the son of Harry and Mabel Jane Wiggins, née Gamblen, of Havant. Harry was a blacksmith, originally in Harting, and in WW1 he served with the Army in Mesopotamia as a farrier. Norman Wiggins was the seventh of nine children and was well-liked but always into mischief. Before WW2 he

was an errand boy for Boots the chemist. Mabel, his mother, died in 1943 following an operation and Norman's sister Myrtle, aged 16, had to look after her father and two of her brothers. Myrtle, born in 1926, said in 2014 that she was born in Brockhampton Lane but in 1928 the family moved to 56 West Street, which had a yard in front of the house where the horses could be tethered. Another of Norman's brothers, Albert Leslie Wiggins, survived WW2, having served with the Army in North Africa and Italy. 'Jim' Wiggins, born in Havant in 1920, was scoutmaster for both the Havant 1st and 2nd Scouts during the war. He was an agricultural worker on Sir Dymoke White's estate at Southleigh, Havant, and as a member of the Home Guard Jim was part of 'Churchill's Secret Army' during preparations at Southleigh for a possible German invasion. The brothers all sang in the St Faith's church choir.

**(See notes above for Reginald Gamblen)**

**GILBERT McCARTNEY WILKINS MC** – Lieutenant Colonel, North Staffordshire Regiment, Commanding the 6th Battalion.

Died 17th August 1944, aged 43.

BAYEUX WAR CEMETERY

Military Cross awarded 11th July 1940, *for gallant and distinguished services in action in connection with recent operations.*

Born Bedfordshire. 1911 census: son of the late Alfred D Wilkins, Deputy Conservator of Forests, India, and Arabella Wilkins; husband of Thyrza Doreen Wilkins of Christchurch. *The Times* of 5th September 1944 has Gilbert's widowed mother living in Bedhampton.



**JOHN PHILLIP WILKINS** – Flight Sergeant 758168 Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

Died 13th July 1941, aged 21.

ALAMEIN MEMORIAL

*Photograph courtesy of Claire Moses, John's cousin.*

In 2013 Paul Wilkins told me that his older brother, John, was shot down over Benghazi. He was acting as a decoy while the rest of his squadron was mining the harbour. John was the son of Christopher William Wilkins FRIBA, and Millicent Wilkins, née Lee, of Havant. It was John's grandfather, Henry Gray Wilkins, who built the Havant War Memorial. When Henry died in 1934 he was living at Green Close, Orchard Road, Havant.

*Hampshire Telegraph* 25.7.1941 – *Sergeant Pilot John Wilkins RAF is missing while on active service. His 21st birthday was spent in the RAF activities in the Near East. There is still hope that he might be safe.*

**HENRY GEORGE CREASE WISHART** – Leading Seaman P/JX 138322, HMS *Exmouth*.

Died 21st January 1940, aged 23.

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

Born Portsmouth. Son of George Edmund and Lucy Olive Elizabeth Wishart, née Pullen. Two of Henry's siblings were born in Havant.

HMS *Exmouth* was torpedoed on 21 January 1940 by the German submarine U-22 (*Jenisch*) off Tarbett Ness in the Moray Firth. *Exmouth* sank with no survivors.

**WILLIAM EDWIN WOOD** Leading Steward P/L 13429, HMS *Javelin*.

Died 22nd October 1939.

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

HMS *Javelin* collided with SS *Mordant* on 22nd October 1939. William Wood was one of two ratings killed in the after messdeck and a third man was recovered after being washed overboard. *Javelin* was towed back to Middlesborough for repair.

*Hampshire Telegraph*, 27.10.1939 – *Leading Steward William Edwin Wood (36) of 2 Park Way, Havant, is officially reported missing, believed drowned, while on active service with a patrol vessel. He was married with three children and only returned to duty, after leave, on Thursday last.*



Havant Platoon, Havant Company, 16th (Havant) Battalion, Home Guard,  
October 1944.

Pte Langlois Pte Ellis Pte Battell Pte Seward (Marksman) L/C Ogborn  
Pte Moore (Marksman) Pte Vidler L/C Peter Freeston  
L/C Whiting Pte Hiscock Pte Boswell L/C Lebbon Cpl Hudson Pte Makin  
Pte Simmons Cpl Thorne Pte Gratwick  
Cpl Stemp Cpl Small Sgt Gibbs Sgt Seward (Platoon Sgt Marksman) Lt Loat  
(Platoon Cmdr) L/C Channer Sgt Elliot Cpl Goodall Cpl Nicholls Cpl Morriss  
Pte Graham (Marksman) Pte Pell L/C John Freeston

## My Wartime Experiences

### John Freeston – 2005

One of the most remarkable achievements of the 2nd World War took place under the noses of the people in the Havant area. Under the code name *Phoenix*, several vast concrete *caissons* which formed part of the *Mulberry Harbours*, were built in record time on the shores of Hayling Island. The operation was very 'hush-hush' and much excitement and speculation was rife in the area. Sir Winston Churchill paid a visit to the works, travelling by rail to Havant and thence by car. Skilled workmen were brought in by

coaches from the mainland. After the bombing of Coventry, special trains carrying rubble for use in making the concrete were run to the South Coast.

On D-Day the caissons were towed to the French coast to form *moles* in the artificial harbours for landing troops, equipment and stores. One caisson sank in Langstone Harbour soon after it was taken in tow, and it can still be seen today. The caissons varied in size, the largest being 200 feet long and 60 feet high, weighing some 6,000 tons. The firm Airspeed, who made aircraft components, was at Langstone Village in the garden and paddock of Langstone Towers and a Sheet Metal Factory was at the rear of the Dolphin, West Street (where the Meridian Centre entrance is).

When the war started I was 16 and with my twin brother Peter worked at Carrell's in South Street Havant. We both went there as apprentices straight from school - me as a brick layer and Peter as a carpenter. After we finished our apprenticeship we were sent to Lake Road, Portsmouth, and helped with the bomb damage. Mr Bevin then called up everybody whose registration number ended in 0 or 9 - that included Peter and me - and we had to immediately report to Portsmouth Dockyard. We were to work on the *Mulberry Harbours* for Bovis. We were fitted with duffel coats and wire cutters and were well looked after. The only day we had off with pay was when they floated the harbours - and then when Field Marshall Montgomery came to thank the workers we had an hour off!

After the platforms were complete I went to work for AR West at Purbrook. We had the maintenance for the Army Camps out at Hambledon and Denmead. King George VI came and viewed the work. I remember the building trade got an extra cheese ration, which helped with our packed lunch.

I was a member of the Home Guard in Havant. We worked from the garage of Langbrook in Langstone. Eight of us would be on duty; two would be out while the others slept. The drill hall in West Street was our Headquarters.

We lived at 10 Lower Grove Road during the worst of the bombing. There was a family that used to come out from Portsmouth and sleep in the front room. Prior to Dunkirk we had two soldiers billeted in the house. We had an

Anderson shelter at the bottom of the garden – it had an extension and there was enough room for seven of us. (*Courtesy Mrs Freeston.*)

## D-Day in Havant

Audrey was born in 1919 and remembers Havant being full of troops throughout WW2. It was mainly Canadian troops who took part in the Dieppe Raid of August 1942 and were annihilated. Audrey watched the returning, wounded men being taken eastwards through Havant on Bren carriers and in ambulances. It was a *truly horrific sight* but Audrey and Mr Smith, the Council rating officer, had time to fill two enamel baths with apples from Mr Smith's garden, to give to the soldiers while they took a break. Lessons were learnt in preparation for the eventual D-Day but at great cost.

Audrey worked as a secretary to Mr Madgwick, the Clerk to the Council, at the old Town Hall in East Street. After work she either carried out nursing duties at the War Memorial Hospital or took her turn on telephone duty, answering calls from the ARP and Portsmouth Dockyard, the latter often warning of air raids. Just before D-Day, in June 1944, Audrey came home from war duties at about 10pm. She was stopped and had to show her ID card and as she approached her house she saw the road was filled with soldiers and army vehicles. The men were awaiting orders to go to France as soon as the weather permitted.

On the night before D-Day Audrey and her mother went to the cinema in East Street. When they came out a couple of large British bombers were flying overhead and when they got home Audrey's father said, *You missed a wonderful sight – they've been flying past all evening.* Next morning when Audrey went to work the caretaker said, *Have you heard the news? We've landed in France.* Audrey dashed home and her mother wondered what the matter was. Audrey said, *Put the wireless on – we've landed in France!* and when Audrey went home for lunch the wireless had been on all the morning.

# Wrens' Quarters at Moorlands

Hazel Rollason's Story.



Wrens at Moorlands. Hazel Rollason is in the front row on the far right.

Moorlands, now The Spring Arts and Heritage Centre, was a private house in East Street until 1942, when the owner Harry Augustus Collins died and the house was requisitioned by the Admiralty.

In March 1943, Hazel Mingham, then Miss Rollason, came to work at Moorlands as a WRNS driver. Hazel was living in rural Warwickshire when she joined up, determined not to work in a factory. At eighteen she was sent to Mill Hill, North London, where occupancy of the new National Medical Research Institute was delayed and the building was instead handed over to the Women's Royal Naval Service. Hazel did her basic two-week training here, refusing to be put down as a cook and bent on being trained as a driver. After qualifying to drive light lorries at the British School of Motoring in Edgware Road, Hazel was drafted firstly to Portsmouth and then to Havant, where she lived with about two dozen Wrens at Moorlands. Towards the end of the war she qualified to drive heavy goods vehicles.

At Moorlands two of the Wrens did the cooking, one looked after the garden

and a Petty Officer was in charge. The four 'cabins' each had three double bunk beds with Admiralty 'anchor' bedspreads, and there was a small library. The large hall, or 'mess', was used for recreation, dining, sing-songs around the 'huge fireplace' and table tennis. The Fleet Air Arm and RAF were invited to matches and to parties and dances. The Empire Cinema in East Street was popular and sometimes the girls cycled to Hayling beach, where the soldiers let them under the barbed wire for a swim.

The Wrens worked at nearby requisitioned houses such as West Leigh and East Leigh (electrical branch), as secretaries, signallers and switchboard operators etc. The Mine Design Department, for example, had been moved out of HMS *Vernon* in Portsmouth to Leigh Park House and West Leigh, after being bombed in 1940. This team included some highly intellectual scientists.



Hazel with the Operational Car.

Hazel, mentally alert and now in her 90th year, told me that she cycled daily from Moorlands to West Leigh Cottage, from where the RMS (Rendering Mines Safe) or 'enemy mine disposal team', operated. There were three Wren drivers on different rotas and they wore bell bottom trousers when on duty. Hazel would sometimes drive the operations car, which had RMS on the side and red wings so that it would be given priority. This was a bit of a joke, as there was very little traffic and no signposts. The 'Op' car had four seats and let down at the back to accommodate equipment. Petrol was obtained from



Stockheath Camp and Hazel was required to drive to anywhere between Kent and Plymouth and sometimes to London. When she was in Portsmouth, at lunchtime, she sat on Southsea beach watching one of the Phoenix Caissons being built for Mulberry Harbour. 'It kept getting bigger and bigger and then disappeared.'

Hazel asked that I mention the extreme bravery of the bomb disposal experts, as she felt that they didn't get the recognition they deserved. Operating from West Leigh Cottage was Commander JGD Ouvry, whose immense courage in making the first magnetic mine safe earned him the DSO. Hazel knew most of the officers listed in John Frayn Turner's book *Service Most Silent*. The book describes Hazel's workplace, since demolished. *Commander Thistleton-Smith, Lieutenant Commander Ouvry, and the rest first saw West Leigh Cottage on a golden morning in October 1940. They motored through a dormant Havant, turning northward. At the crossroads a mile out of the town, the car swung right and then down a lane lined with beech trees, shedding their leaves through the blue, smoky air. Past West Leigh House, a square, grey stone building with a terrace away to the south, an ornamental pond on the west and stables, which were later to become a fitting shop. A winding drive from the House inside the grounds led down to the Cottage.*



The 'Underwater Weapons Teams' at the rear of West Leigh Cottage, Havant. *(Courtesy of Hazel Mingham, née Rollason who is seated seventh from the left.)*

Just before D-Day the Havant area was swarming with troops, in all the side streets, and it was difficult driving into Portsmouth as they were parked all along the central reservation. On D-Day, itself, Hazel was on 'early turn' and had the wireless on. It was very tense but she knew they'd gone – 'I just knew they'd gone and after that it was so quiet'.

About six months before the end of the war Hazel went out in a troopship to Sydney, where she worked as a driver. The war ended suddenly but she did not return home before marrying a Royal Marine in Australia!



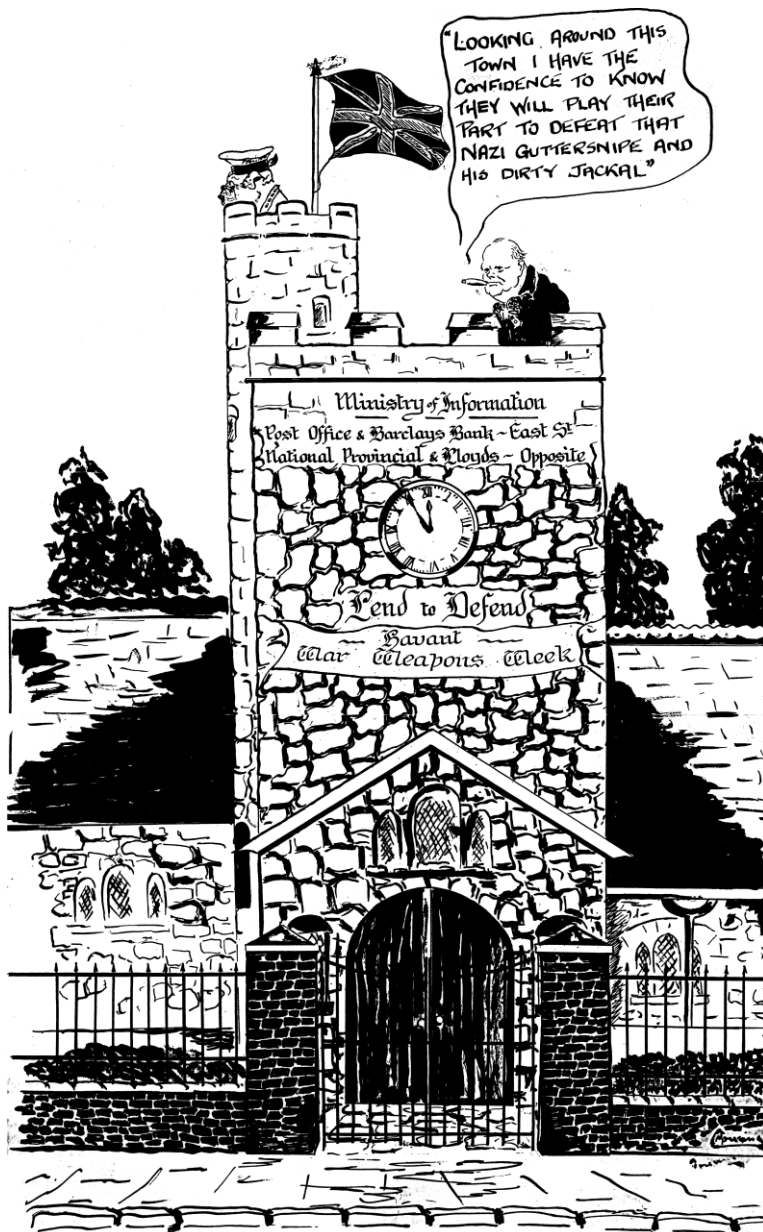
Poster depicting Lord Haw Haw drawn by Basil Cousins to advertise Mrs Burchell's whist drives. ("Jarmany calling!!! Jarmany calling!!!") "It is authoritively known that Mrs Burchell holds whist drives in the British Legion Hall every Saturday night." "Is this not a well known fact that the British are holding all the trumps???" ("Now you skunk, I want the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth").



Havant, July 1941. (*Hampshire Library & Information Service.*)

On 26th July 1941 Havant War Weapons Week had an enthusiastic send-off when crowds lined the streets for a parade that took fifteen minutes to pass the saluting base. Admiral Sir William James, C-in-C Portsmouth, took the salute. The parade marched to Havant Park, where about 2,500 persons assembled. A telegram from the Lord Chancellor was read out stating that the success of the War Savings Campaign was each person's responsibility. As the parade dispersed an RAF plane dropped leaflets bearing the couplet; *If you lend your £ s. d. Victory we soon shall see*. Most of the crowd remained to watch a gunnery display.

On Sunday 27th July St Faith's Church was filled to overflowing when a united service of prayer and dedication was held in the afternoon. The congregation included all branches of the Civil Defence services and a detachment of the Hants Constabulary.



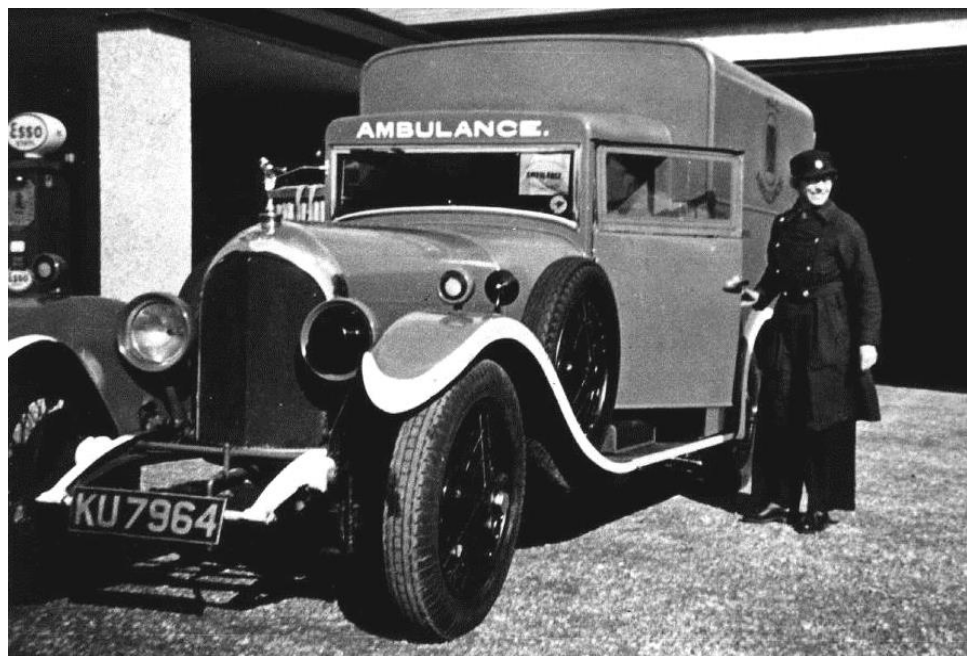
*"Looking around this town I have the confidence to know they will play their part to defeat that nazi guttersnipe and his dirty jackal." Poster drawn by Basil Cousins for War Weapons Week.*



Collecting scrap for the war effort. (*Hampshire Library & Information Service.*)



Havant Fire Brigade 1937/38. (*Hampshire Library & Information Service.*)



Bentley ambulance, Havant 1941. (*Hampshire Library & Information Service.*)



Home Guard parade in Havant Park.





The Under-Secretary of State for War presents his compliments and by Command of the Army Council has the honour to transmit the enclosed Awards granted for service in the war of 1939-45.

The Council share your sorrow that  
2198731 A/L/Cpl LEBBON, C.B.  
in respect of whose service these  
Awards are granted did not  
live to receive them.

Medals awarded to those who lost their lives were forwarded to their next of kin after the war ended. (*Official notification of Cyril Lebbon's Awards by courtesy of his family.*)

**MORE SHIPS-**  
*Come on!*



**WAR SAVINGS**  
**are Warships . . .**